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12mo

March 49
1846



Sir Richard Lovinge.

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REGINALD DU BRAY:

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A N

HISTORICK TALE.

BY A LATE LORD,

Greatly admired in the LITERARY WORLD;

And join both profit and delight in one.
CREECH'S HOR.

D U B L I N:

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M DCC LXXIX.

One of our most celebrated Critical Censors gives the following Character of this Work.

“ IN THIS PERFORMANCE, WHICH APPEARS TO BE THE LITERARY OFFSPRING OF LONGSWORD, EARL OF SALISBURY, THE READER IS ENGAGED IN AN AGREEABLE PURSUIT THAT DRAWS HIM ON WITH PLEASURE, EXCITES HIS CURIOSITY WITHOUT WONDER, AND RENDERS HIM INSENSIBLE OF THE FATIGUES THAT ACCOMPANY READING MOST OTHER PRODUCTIONS.—THE STYLE IS PURE AND ELEGANT; THE INCIDENTS NUMEROUS, PROBABLE, AND VARIOUS, ELUCIDATED BY A CHAIN OF THE MOST AFFECTING EXAMPLES THAT DISPLAY VIRTUE AS THE ONLY SOLID BASIS OF GREATNESS, AND VICE THE SURE PATH TO DETESTATION AND IGNOMINY.”





REGINALD DU BRAY:

A N

HISTORICK TALE.

B O O K I.

TOWARDS the close of the reign of Henry, the Third of that name, Sovereign over the British Isles, Reginald du Bray, a valiant knight, after having signalized himself by deeds of heroism against the enemies of the Christian Faith in the Holy Land, applied to the general, for leave to return home, when the armies were going to retire to their respective quarters for the winter. His services, and the wounds he had received, impaired his constitution: he was approaching the vale of years, and the silver blossoms of age were visible in his beard and hair. The Christian

A 2

army

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army lamented the loss of a chieftain, who had ever signalized his zeal for the cause which he embraced: they mourned the loss of the man who had shewn their troops the road to victory; and carried confusion and ruin to the tents of the infidels.

WHEN he and his faithful followers, the few that survived the many encounters to which their lord had led them, and where he personally shared their danger, were prepared for their departure from the Christian camp; they received the most honourable testimony of the affection and regard of those warriors that remained: they were escorted to the sea side, by the principal officers, who saw, with regret, the departure of a man they loved and admired. Propitious winds filled the white bosoms of his swelling sails, and the vessel plowed the foaming deep.

CROWNED with glory, and arrayed with honour, Reginald sought retirement in the land of his fathers; intending to dedicate the remainder of his days to the service of his God; in defence of whose name he had so often engaged in the horror of battle. His followers were enriched with spoil, and returned laden with the plunder of the enemies of
of

AN HISTORICK TALE. 5

of their faith. The soul of Reginald coveted nought but glory.

FOUR years had he been absent from his native land. The loss of his only son, whose early virtues gave a promising hope of future excellence, had overwhelmed the unhappy Reginald with unceasing grief: but his soul was driven to despair, when he saw the partner of his heart, the faithful and virtuous companion of his days, sink under the stroke, and accompany her beloved child to the grave. Force was used to prevent his destroying himself, and joining in death, the objects of his dearest affections. His passions were violent, and they long maintained their dominion over him. Grief and unbounded sorrow, that knew not restraint, and was not to be alleviated, seized him: his nature was not capable of sustaining the conflict; and his friends and dependants saw themselves in danger of losing him by the severity of a fatal malady. None was so assiduous as Matilda: Matilda yet remained, the issue of his chaste and honourable love. Though scarce fifteen, her mother's care had rendered her the admiration of every body. Affected as she was at the death of her beloved parent, and the loss of a brother; yet, without ceasing to bewail her departed friends, she exerted

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erted all her care in endeavouring to recover her father, whose death would have left her an orphan, and in the power of an uncle she had reason to dread. Heaven seconded her pious efforts; and she saw her father escape from the jaws of dissolution. Bad as his distemper was, his despondence was still his greatest enemy: he cared not for life, when every thing he wished for was gone: his power, his wealth, would depart from his family into the hands of strangers; or, what he deemed still worse, be the prey of his brother, whose manners had rendered him an alien to the soul of Reginald. When he recovered the use of his senses, which the first impression of his grief, and his fever co-operating, had deprived him of; the afflicted Matilda caused the prior of a neighbouring monastery, which the piety of her ancestors had founded, to attend her father, and, by inculcating the sublime truths of the purest religion, to pour the balm of peace on his distressed mind.

FATHER Anselm was meek, humble, and truly pious. His aspect was calculated to inspire reverence and love: his words sunk deep into the mind, for his language proceeded from his heart; while the purity and innocence of his life and manners, gave authority

thority to his precepts. As his actions were the example and pattern of his flock, his words failed not to convince, or to persuade.

THIS reverend father had ever been the friend, the favourite of Reginald; who beheld his approach, with a gleam of satisfaction as he drew near his bed. "In happy hour art thou come to administer comfort to my departing soul: hasten," continued the baron, almost exhausted, "hasten, and prepare me to join those souls in bliss, who behold, with pleasure, the hour drawing near, in which I shall be united to them."

"HEAVEN," replied the friar, "has perhaps decreed you a longer residence here: it is our duty to submit with reverence to its decrees."

THE baron felt the truth of this assertion, delivered with that authority and weight which ever attended the prior's words: his soul was humbled before him, and he waited, in silence, to hear the language of heaven delivered by one of its purest ministers.

THE friar saw, and rejoiced in the success of his speech; but he did not design to alarm and

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and harass the imagination of his lord, with a description of future horror, or threats of punishment in a world of endless woe, prepared for the guilty. He saw his distress, and preached the words of peace. He shewed the merits, and the benefits of a pious resignation to the decrees of heaven. He awakened hope, and cherished faith in the breast of the desponding baron. He shewed the folly, the sinfulness of despair, in the strongest light; and roused his parental affection for his yet remaining child, by describing her virtues, in such terms as she merited.

His heart began to feel a father's fondness, from the lively description of the prior: his resolution was almost overcome by his arguments, when Matilda entering her father's apartment, completed the conquest. Her features, which bore the exact resemblance of her mother, revived his love; and her face, that was clouded with grief and anxiety, claimed his tenderness: she approached his bed, and throwing herself on her knees, kissed his hand, and bathed it with her tears, while she enquired concerning the state he found himself in, and what nourishment she should prepare for him. He was unable to reply for some time: words, accompanied with tears, at last found their way: "yes,—I will
" live,"

“ live,” said he in broken accents; “ if hea-
 “ ven will permit me, I will live to recom-
 “ pense thy care, thy love and tenderness:
 “ yes, Matilda, I will become thy father in-
 “ deed. Blinded by partial affection to my
 “ son, whom I considered as the representa-
 “ tive of my fame and honours, I overlooked
 “ your humbler virtues. He is taken from
 “ me: though the stroke is severe, I acknow-
 “ ledge the justice of it, and kiss the rod that
 “ smote me.”

SUCH a confession was more than the sen-
 sibility of the delicate Matilda could sup-
 port; a flood of tears eased her oppressed
 heart, which was filled with unutterable love
 and gratitude. The prior, fearing the baron
 would be too much affected with the tender
 scene, led Matilda into another apartment,
 till she should recover herself; and sent some
 domestics to attend her father. From that
 hour he grew better: and the pious Anselm
 continued to confirm him in the paths of vir-
 tue, by the frequency and gentleness of his ex-
 hortations.

REGINALD, though he had overcome the
 transports of his sorrow, could not behold,
 without emotion, scenes, where he had en-
 joyed such happiness as he once possessed. He

B

grew

grew pensive and melancholy. The assiduities of his daughter were all in vain: he returned her caresses and repaid her affection; but she could not dispel the cloud of grief that hung over him. The prior watched every action of his patron: he saw him, with concern, resign himself insensibly to unavailing affliction. To rouse him into action, was the only method left to cure him. The princes of Europe were arming, to recover the Holy Land from the foes to the faith of Christ. The prior roused the baron's zeal; and he embraced the proposal of accompanying Edward, the son of his king, with joy. He settled his domestic affairs, and left his daughter under the care of his friend the prior, and Beatrice the sister of his late wife, who resided at his castle. Then assembling a few vassals, he took the cross, in spite of the tears and ineffectual endeavours of Matilda to detain him. His youth had been distinguished by deeds of chivalry, and feats of arms: his fame was not unknown to his prince, who honoured him with particular regard, and gave him authority and command. The experience of age tempered the valour of Reginald, and, on every occasion, he approved himself worthy his prince's favour.

THE

THE heart of Reginald at length glowed with desire to see his daughter. The dangers and fatigues he had experienced, rendered repose necessary to his welfare; and he painted the charms of domestic retirement, in the most pleasing colours. His voyage was prosperous and happy; and as his castle was in the neighbourhood of the sea, he repaired to it immediately. Matilda, in a speechless transport of joy, embraced her father; who returned her tenderness with equal pleasure and affection. The resemblance she bore to her mother, whose image was too deeply impressed on the heart of Reginald, to be ever eradicated, encreased his love. He snatched her to his bosom, and, in the most endearing terms, assured her of his fondness. Matilda merited the affection of her father: her mind was a rich jewel, contained in a most beautiful casket. Her natural and acquired accomplishments could not be surpassed. Her size exceeded rather the common height of women; but the symmetry and proportion of her shape, prevented that from appearing a defect. Her skin was white as the unsullied snow on the mountain, save where the crimson of her lips, and the rosy hue of her cheeks, opposed a striking contrast to the shining brightness of her bosom: her eyes were large, blue, and sparkling; but mild as the moon in the even-

ing of summer, when she darts her trembling beams through the intermingled branches of the trees of the forest, and gilds the glittering stream that murmurs at their roots. Her mind was fraught with every virtue, that could ornament her sex: the prior had formed the plastic heart of Matilda, to love the good, and pity the bad; and had warmed it with the pure and gentle flame of religion. Her heart was susceptible of every tender impression; but if she ever erred, it was on the side of mercy. The wretched, whom chance or necessity conducted to the castle, never went unrelieved away. The charity and beauty of Matilda were equally famous. Reginald saw, with delight, the charms of his daughter: he beheld her virtues, with transport: the thoughts of her future happiness took up his attention, and engrossed all his mind; yet he feared the artifices of mankind, for he knew them; and he dreaded lest so fair a flower should be blasted by the hand of the spoiler.

REGINALD, at his return, was visited by his friends. They rejoiced in his safety, they partook of his glory, and triumphed in his acquisition of fresh honour. His castle was now a scene of festivity and mirth. The hall resounded with the voice of music, and the minstrels celebrated the deeds of warriors in the hour

hour of battle. They sung the warlike feats of heroes against the infidels in the land of Palestine, where the fierce Saracen opposed the horned crescent to the cross. The reverend warrior grew warm at the sound: he enumerated, to his friends, the power, the names, the virtues of the Christian chiefs. He recounted their heroic deeds in the strife of arms, and magnified their fame. The breasts of the company were filled with pleasure, and they gloried in the might of the champions of their faith. Matilda trembled at the recital of the dangers of the field of blood. "The arm of my father," said the gentle maid, "was not idle in those dreadful scenes: great was his fame in the combat, and he has earned his glory with danger and toil. Recount thine own achievements, nor let us seek, from the report of others, the deeds of Reginald."

"ILL would it become the tongue of the warrior, to be the herald of the deeds of his arms," replied the hoary chief; "but thy desire is the consequence of thy filial affection, and thou shalt learn the dangers of thy father."

"EDWARD landed at Acon in Palestine, just as the Saracens sat down before that
city,

“ city. His troops were few, but faithful:
“ yet they were fatigued with the dangers
“ and hardships of the sea, and were scarcely
“ able to oppose the foe of our holy religion.
“ There was no occasion of putting
“ their zeal and courage, which nothing
“ could overcome, to the proof: They
“ forgot their fatigues in the presence of
“ their prince, and demanded to be led to
“ the conflict. The Christians, who dreaded
“ the power of the foe, received fresh
“ courage from the arrival of Edward. His
“ name was alone an host. The Saracens
“ dreaded a prince, in whose veins the
“ blood of the first Richard flowed: that
“ Richard, who had so often defeated their
“ bravest commanders, and destroyed their
“ most formidable armies, was yet terrible
“ to them in his descendant. They retired
“ with precipitation from the walls of
“ Acon, and quitted their prey with shame.
“ The troops were no sooner refreshed, than
“ the valiant Edward longed to attack the
“ enemies of his faith. Eager to fight under
“ the banners of so renowned a champion,
“ the Christians flocked to his standard:
“ but still few were the opposers of
“ the Infidels, whose armies exceeded our’s
“ tenfold.

“ FROM

“ FROM Acon we bent our way to Nazareth, then in the hands of the Saracens, and our commander resolved to besiege it. The number of the enemy enclosed in the city greatly exceeded that of the Christian army; but our cause was good, and our general inspired us with confidence of victory wherever he went. The Saracens were timid and dubious of success against the prowess of Edward. Nothing but his conduct and bravery could have opposed and conquered such difficulties. The city was of a large extent, and our men were scarcely sufficient to maintain their posts with all their vigilance. The third night of the siege had just elapsed, when the Infidels, supposing us unprepared, made a furious sally. Mine was the care of the troops on that side of the city where the attack was made. They found me ready to die like a soldier, for I was harnessed for the battle. The conflict was bloody; the valour of the Christians opposing the number of the enemy, which poured out of the city continually. The design of the foe was to force our camp where it was weakest; and, for that purpose, endeavoured to fatigue our men before the choicest of their troops should sally out of the city. The
“ battle

“ battle was yet doubtful; for we could
“ not drive them back, supported as they
“ were, nor could their utmost efforts make
“ the Christians recede. It was at this mo-
“ ment they resolved to make their at-
“ tempt; and a body of fresh troops rush-
“ ing out of the city, attacked us, fainting
“ and weary, with the utmost impetuosity.
“ The sight of danger animated our cou-
“ rage, and we met their swords ere they
“ fell. Sharp and fierce the battle raged:
“ three of my trusty followers had fallen by
“ my side; I had received two wounds,
“ but they did not disable me from main-
“ taining my post. In this work of death,
“ I endeavoured to sustain the spirits of my
“ men. In riding from one part of the
“ field to the other, a Saracen met me,
“ who, from his arms and splendid trap-
“ pings, I supposed to be the chief of his
“ troops.” “ Christian,” said he, “ prepare
“ to die: I have long observed thee thinning
“ the ranks of the armies of the prophet with
“ thy sword. Yield thee, or die.” — “ Die
“ then, insulting infidel, for to yield is un-
“ known to the soul of Reginald. We
“ charged; and the foe of thy father was
“ unhorsed on the plain, Matilda: but his
“ friends rushed between us, and preserved
“ him from my vengeance. Rage inspired
“ them

“ them with a desire of avenging the dis-
 “ grace of their chief. An hundred swords
 “ glittered round my head, and an hundred
 “ foes struck at me together. A lance pierc-
 “ ed my horse, and he fell. I remained
 “ at the mercy of the enraged infidels. En-
 “ tangled with my armour, and bruised with
 “ the fall, I deemed myself lost to life and
 “ fame at once; but heaven destined me
 “ to enjoy the sight of my beloved Ma-
 “ tilda once more.”

THE eyes of the gentle maid poured forth
 tears, her breast heaved with sobs, she was
 dissolved in woe at the recital of the danger
 of her sire. The audience remained fixed
 in attentive silence to learn the issue of the
 combat.

“ THE sword was already lifted to be
 “ plunged into my breast; I had recom-
 “ mended my soul to heaven, when I saw
 “ a blow arrest the arm that was uplifted
 “ for my destruction, and the soldier fell.
 “ A knight, arrayed in white armour, was
 “ the instrument of my deliverance. The
 “ death of one victim did not satisfy him:
 “ in vain the hostile bands opposed his
 “ course; they either fell around him, or
 “ else fled from the terror of his arm:

C

“ one

“ one more daring than the rest faced his
“ fury; but he soon found himself con-
“ quered. An associate endeavoured to as-
“ sist him: he struck at the knight, be-
“ hind, but fear and confusion unnerved his
“ arm, and he only cut the straps that
“ fastened on the helmet of my deliverer,
“ which immediately fell off. The blow
“ was not given with impunity. Wheeling
“ round with inexpressible swiftness, he
“ overtook the wretched assassin that fled
“ from his presence, and plunging his sword
“ through the caitiff’s neck, brought him
“ to the earth. By this time my attend-
“ ants had raised me from the ground; and
“ the troops, animated by the exploits of
“ the young hero, repulsed the Infidels
“ with great slaughter. They lost most of
“ their men, and scarcely thought them-
“ selves safe in their walls. I was yet in
“ the field, and had enquired from those
“ about me if they knew to whom I was
“ indebted for my life, my safety, and my
“ honour. They knew no more of him
“ than that he was an Englishman, who
“ had them follow him, to save their mas-
“ ter. When his helmet was struck off
“ in the fight, I saw, with amazement,
“ the face of a youth scarce arrived at
“ manhood: his eyes sparkled with such
“ fire

“ fire and vivacity, that it was impossible
 “ for his foes to endure the fury of his
 “ looks: his features were rather beauti-
 “ ful than handsome; and his face bespoke
 “ the emotions of his soul, that burned
 “ with the desire of glory, and the hope
 “ of atchieving a name in arms against the
 “ foes of our holy faith. His auburn
 “ hair shaded his forehead, and falling in
 “ curls over his neck, added a manly grace
 “ to his countenance. He returned in tri-
 “ umph from the chase of the foe, whom
 “ he pursued to the gates of their city.
 “ The loss of his casque had not abated
 “ his ardor, or prevented his meeting any
 “ danger that opposed him. He saw me
 “ waiting on the field, and, alighting from
 “ his horse, approached me. ——— What
 “ thanks are due to thee, gallant youth, for
 “ the services thou hast rendered me!”
 ‘ Let not thy words, reverend chief,’ “ re-
 “ plied the youth, with a blush that be-
 “ spoke modesty,” ‘ cover me with confu-
 ‘ sion: let not thy benevolence over-rate my
 ‘ poor services: to have assisted Reginald
 ‘ Du Bray in the hour of danger will be
 ‘ the pride of my life.’ “ Let me know to
 “ whom I owe my life, and my honour.”
 ‘ Pardon my presumption,’ “ replied he,”
 ‘ if the rashness of my youth should disobey
 C 2 ‘ thy

‘ thy commands: ill would it besit me to
 ‘ hear praises bestowed on actions so little
 ‘ worthy of them; the fame of thy deeds
 ‘ is no stranger to my ear; and when I
 ‘ shall have earned myself a name in arms,
 ‘ to merit thy esteem, I will then make
 ‘ myself known to thee.’ “ His squire at
 “ that instant presenting him his helmet,
 “ which was distinguished with a white
 “ plume; he immediately put it on, and
 “ vaulting on his horse with incredible agi-
 “ lity, said, — ‘ My duty calls me else-
 ‘ where; adieu, valiant chief; may success
 ‘ ever attend thy arms.’ “ He rode off at
 “ full speed, and left me in admiration of
 “ his figure and valour. My wounds grew
 “ stiff, and I was taken to my tent to have
 “ them dressed. The prince soon after vi-
 “ sited me: his royal heart is the seat of
 “ every virtue. Of him I enquired the
 “ name of my deliverer: he waved the
 “ question, and I could not presume on his
 “ goodness, to press him to tell me. In a
 “ few days the city fell before the con-
 “ quering arms of Edward, and our troops
 “ were enriched with the spoils of the un-
 “ believers.”

THE soul of Matilda hung upon the
 words of her father. She longed to thank
 the

the hero that rescued him from death: her heart burnt with gratitude, and the lively description of the charms of the young warrior sunk deep in her remembrance.

BUT did not my father see this generous youth again? Did he not thank his deliverer?

“MY wounds,” replied the chief, “condemned me for some days, and in that interval I saw him not. When Nazareth was taken, we set out on our return to Acon with our spoils: I was then sufficiently recovered to bear arms again. The fierce Infidel, impatient of the disgrace he had suffered in the reduction of Nazareth, endeavoured to retrieve his fame, and avenge his loss. We had left the plain, and entered into an hollow way; our van-guard had here passed the defile, when we were surprized with the sight of the enemy’s forces, which seemed to surround us. By the neglect of our spies we had fallen into this ambuscade. In this emergency our valiant and renowned general preserved us all by his courage and conduct. The disposition he made was such as bespoke him an experienced commander: his per-

sonal

“sonal actions proclaimed him the invin-
“cible soldier. The rear was assigned to
“my care: and I was posted on an emi-
“nence, to prevent our being entirely sur-
“rounded. In this situation, casting my
“eyes around the field of death, I per-
“ceived at a distance the snowy plume that
“distinguished the helmet of the gallant
“youth. He was in the advanced guard;
“and he fought to rejoin the main body
“of the army. He was easily discerned
“in the rage of fight; for his path was
“marked with desolation, and destruction
“attended his right-hand. I saw him fell
“to the ground one of the chief of the
“Infidels, who fled from the fury of his
“arm. I had seen his further progress,
“had not my attention been called to
“my own defence; for thinking they
“should be able to make a greater im-
“pression on the rear, than where the
“prince and this gallant knight fought in
“person, the Saracens wheeled round the
“hill, and attacked us with their utmost
“fury. Great was the disparity in our
“numbers; but the example of our prince,
“and the superiority of our discipline, made
“us a match for them, and they were
“received in a manner they did not ex-
“pect. The conflict was obstinate for a
“short

" short time, though it was bloody; ten
 " thousand of the enemy fell on the spot
 " before they gave ground. In the pur-
 " suit I was pierced by a lance in the
 " neck, which caused a great effusion of
 " blood. By this time our foes on all
 " sides found safety only in flight, and we
 " pursued our way in peace to Acon. My
 " wounds confined me there also, and in
 " that time I was informed my generous
 " deliverer was sent on a distant service.
 " From that hour I could never learn tid-
 " ings of him."

THE warrior ceased. The friends of Re-
 ginald filled the bowls of joy; and the lofty
 hall echoed the sounds of exultation. Ma-
 tilda retired with her damsels from the fes-
 tive board, and the fatigues of the warrior
 were forgotten in the pleasures of the ban-
 quet.

THE lovely Matilda sought her cham-
 ber; her fancy was occupied in the con-
 templation of the youth whom her father
 had described. Employed in acts of bene-
 ficence and charity, her soul was filled only
 with her duty, and her mind was busied in
 contriving the means of performing it. The
 account of the youthful warlike knight in-
 spired

spired her with emotions that were strangers to her heart. She wished to see him. She repeated the words of her father, and dwelt with pleasure on the recital of his heroic actions: but she trembled at the thoughts of his danger. During the absence of her father, her life had been that of a recluse. The castle walls were the bounds of her steps; and she employed her time in attaining the accomplishments of her sex, in her devotions, and in works of charity: in the former she was guided by the care of her aunt, the prior directed and superintended the rest. It was her custom every Friday, after the celebration of divine service in the chapel in her father's castle, to distribute charity to the pilgrims, and other poor people, who came constantly to receive her alms. She enquired into their distresses, and relieved their wants. The eye of sorrow was gladdened in her presence: her kindness and beneficence caused the heavy heart of affliction to go light away. The report of those who had been relieved by her bounty was ever favourable to her; and the fame of her beauty and virtue was diffused like a grateful odour round the land.

END OF THE FIRST BOOK.

BOOK

B O O K II.

NONE was more inflamed with the account of her charms than Ardulph, son of Simon de Fitzwalter, a baron, possessed of an extensive demesne, great wealth, and numerous vassals; but his soul was a stranger to the virtues of humanity. His power only gave him greater opportunities of oppressing those who were unhappy enough to be under his command; and he lived amidst his dependents feared and hated; for their services were not the effects of love or gratitude. He was proud, vindictive, and violent; and this urged him to join the discontented barons, and take up arms against his sovereign. Oft had he tried to seduce Reginald, whose castle was within a small distance of his, from his loyalty; but his fidelity was not to be shaken; and when he joined the standard of his king, he thrice took Simon prisoner, and twice did his heavy ransom contribute to fill the coffers of Reginald. Thence sprung in the soul of Simon the most rancorous hatred to the race, and even to the name of du Bray;

D

and

and oft had he resolved in his mind, un-
awed by any other consideration than the
fear of punishment, the surprisal of Regi-
nald's castle in his absence, and the de-
struction of his whole race. But he knew
his own ruin must speedily follow, from
the wrath of the king, in whose special
protection was the castle and family of his
hated foe. His disappointed malice preyed
on his vitals, and he fell a sacrifice to the
death he had plotted for others. Ardulph,
his only son, succeeded him in title and
hatred to the generous Reginald. Ardulph
was in his prime of youth, bold, daring,
and impetuous, the slave of his passions
which never knew controul; and he pur-
sued his purpose with unceasing perseve-
rance, and cared not by what means he at-
tained his ends. The violated honour of
the daughters of his vassals, his cruelty to
those who dared to complain of his injus-
tice, and the unbridled licentiousness of his
manners, sufficiently marked the character of
Ardulph: his person, which was fitted for
deeds of hardy prowess, was strong, active,
and tall; and his face, in which manly
beauty shone conspicuous, disguised the de-
formities of his soul. The fame of Ma-
tilda's matchless charms struck Ardulph with
a desire of possessing them. But to learn
whether

whether the report was true, he clad himself in the garb of a palmer, and, on the usual day of her distributing her charity, he appeared among the crowd that demanded alms. An artful tale of distress melted the compassionate heart of Matilda, and she relieved the wants of the pretended mendicant, with unfeigned generosity. His eyes drank large draughts of love from the inexhaustible fountain of her beauty, and he saw, with grief, the time allowed for his stay expired. He hastened homewards in an agony of despair and affliction: his passions were all up in arms, and he determined to possess Matilda, or to die. The thought of wedding the daughter of his father's foe was opposed by his pride and eagerness of revenge. The impossibility of gratifying his desire in any other way, only augmented it. Oft did he, at the dead of night, circle the castle of Reginald with many a weary step, in hopes of finding some unguarded spot on which he might make a successful attempt. Oft did he dispatch his spies in mid-day, to try if the vigilance of the guards was relaxed by the appearance of security: but in vain: the knights to whom Reginald had committed the care of his daughter and his castle were men of approved courage and fidelity, and never

suffered their charge to be neglected. In the most anxious state of grief and despair did he pass his time, till the return of Reginald inspired him with fresh hopes.

IN a short space after his arrival he dispatched a messenger to the castle of Reginald. "This," said he, "did my Lord charge me to say; Ardulph grieves that his father was the foe of Reginald: that father is no more; why should his animosities survive? They are buried with him. Fame has made Ardulph acquainted with the virtues of Reginald, why should he not improve by so good an example, and profit by it? Let the unhappy feuds, that have disturbed the peace of two families so long, be buried in eternal oblivion, unless Reginald will carry his resentment beyond the grave, and punish the son for the failings of his father."

"THEY are all forgotten," replied the generous, unsuspecting chief; "tell thy lord that the heart of Reginald harbours no malice against the dead: let Ardulph visit me in safety: the feast of friendship is spread for him in the hall, and let him hasten to partake of it. But, should

“ should he doubt his security, I will send
“ him five knights as hostages.”

So kind a return to his message filled Ardulph with pleasure. He was no stranger to the honour of Reginald, so hastened to his castle with a small retinue. He well knew such a reliance upon his faith would win the heart and confidence of the baron; nor was he mistaken: Reginald was pleased to see the son of his foe submit to him, and sue to be admitted to his friendship. He met and received him with the most winning cordiality, and entertained him with the most generous hospitality.

MATILDA presided at the feast, and the impassioned Ardulph incessantly fixed his eyes upon her charms, more brilliant, more piercing now, than when she relieved the counterfeit pilgrim, and recommended, with tear-full eyes, her father, warring in the Holy Land, to his prayers. Her beauty was now irresistible, and he suffered it to take entire possession of his heart. The guileless Matilda was ignorant of the meaning of his enraptured glances, and her gentle demeanor added fuel to the fire. With difficulty he smothered emotions, that the strong workings of his passion gave birth to,

to, from the eye of Reginald; but his natural craft got the better, and his dissimulation veiled his thoughts from observance. His next study was to win the good opinion of Reginald; and his seeming candour, and generous sentiments, inspired the old baron with the most favourable thoughts of him. The first step thus gained, the second became still less difficult. He frequently resorted to Reginald's castle alone, to consult him on pretended business. His advice was always observed and followed with the most scrupulous punctuality; and the crafty youth had already gained the heart of the baron, whose vanity was agreeably flattered in the deferences that Ardulph paid to his counsel. The lover seldom returned without seeing the object of his wishes, and every time he saw her he was more loth to leave her presence than before. His heart was consumed in the fierceness of the flame her eyes had kindled. At one time he resolved to avow his passion to her father, and claim his daughter, but his pride forbade that humiliating step; at another he bursted into fits of madness and despair. In one of these he resolved to snatch by force what hatred, and thirst of revenge, prevented his suing for.

THE dread of Ardulph's father, and the absence of her own, had rendered the last four years of Matilda's life a scene of solitary confinement: his return, and the reconciliation that had since happened, removed the causes of her restraint. The lovely maid had now nothing to dread: she strayed at liberty in the meadows that surrounded her father's castle; she would recline herself on the flowery banks of the gentle and limpid stream that meandered through them, and communicated health and luxuriance as it flowed. A wood at a small distance, on the other side, often sheltered the beauteous Matilda from the mid-day heat. Ardulph had notice, by his spies which he maintained in the castle of Reginald, of these excursions of his daughter. He knew her damsels only accompanied her, whilst her innocence and inexperience rendered her an easy prey to his wiles, and her slender guard to his force. It was in the hottest month in the year, when the sun had began to slope his course to the west, that Matilda left her father's castle, and sought the friendly shade of the grove, attended, as usual, by her maidens: her head was crowned with a wreath of roses, entwined with jasmines; the sprigs and flowers were intermixed with her hair, which

which flowed carelessly over her neck and shoulders, and shaded them from the sun. Her robe was loose, and, as she moved, displayed her shape, in which all was elegance and proportion, to the greatest advantage: the breeze, that played beneath the umbrageous boughs, fanned her bosom, panting with heat; health glowed in her countenance, her eyes blazed with unusual radiance. What a prey, to tempt the hands of the spoiler! What a prize for the unbridled licentiousness of Ardulph! The heart of innocence and security is chearful. Matilda sang; the echo of the grove joined her with transport. Her look was beauty, her voice was harmony. The sight of two peasants, who rose from the ground at her approach, stopped her. She drew near them. Struck with her appearance, they bent their knees to the ground in humble adoration. So respectful a posture gave her no apprehensions, and she went up to them: they were young, and one of them particularly handsome; but toil and weariness seemed to have oppressed them, and their garbs shewed that they had been journeying from afar.

“WHENCE came you?” said the charming maid, “or whose liegemen are you?” Her voice was as sweet as the breath of the morning,

morning, that steals perfumes from the roses
 it visits in its course. The elder of the
 two answered, " We are strangers, lady,
 " whom misfortune has led out of our way:
 " all the day have we toiled in the heat
 " of the sun, till, weary and faint for want
 " of refreshment, we sought this shade to
 " repose ourselves, till the coolness of the
 " evening shall give us fresh spirits to pur-
 " sue our journey. But if our ignorant in-
 " trusion has offended you, gracious lady,
 " Oh grant us your pardon, and attribute
 " to our fatigue the fault we have com-
 " mitted."

" You have committed no fault, nor am
 " I offended. But had you known this
 " country, you had not lacked refreshment.
 " Rise, young men; and when you come
 " to the edge of the wood, you will see
 " the castle of Reginald du Bray. His doors
 " are never shut to the traveller. Hasten
 " thither with what speed your weariness
 " will permit you, and you will meet an
 " hospitable reception."

" THANKS, gracious lady," returned the
 peasant. As she proceeded on her way, she
 was silent. Her thoughts were occupied by
 the appearance of the two men she had
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seen. "Martha," said she to the damsel on whom she leaned, the most faithful and most esteemed by her of all her train, "didst thou observe the younger of those peasants, whom we just parted with?"

"I DID," replied the maiden, "with attention."

"AND what are thy thoughts?" demanded her lady.

"I THINK that his face bears the marks of openness and honesty; and his eyes, which were fastened upon you only, expressed great feelings."

MATILDA, who had taken notice herself of the looks of the stranger, who had not removed his eyes from contemplating her person with looks of awe and admiration, while his companion spoke to her, was sensible of the remark of Martha, and blushed.

"I OBSERVED him," replied she with a smile: "my strange appearance to one who had not been accustomed to see others than those of his own rank in life, caused his surprize. I myself should have been astonished in a like situation."

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THUS they beguiled the way; but the face of the young peasant was uppermost in Matilda's imagination: she had never before seen any thing that pleased her so much. 'It is a pity,' said she to herself, 'that he is not of gentle birth: his face, if it reveals his mind, must be joined to a noble soul. But perhaps some shepherds would be left to pine after him, to whom it may be he has plighted his honest faith.'

THE abrupt appearance of two men, who rushed out of a thicket and planted themselves in her way, disturbed her silent though pleasing soliloquies. They were armed with swords: and their demeanour, so widely different from that of the peasants she had just passed, filled her with fears. These were augmented, when hearing a cry from one of the maidens that followed her, she turned about, and saw two others, who prevented them from joining their lady. "Why use you this violence to my attendants, uncourteous men? Permit the damsels to pass unmolested."

"LADY," said one of them, "thy damsels shall meet no violence: but our business is with you."

“ THEN declare it,” said the trembling maid.

“ OUR commands are, to persuade you to accompany us; we came for you: let us prevail on you to avoid obliging us to use compulsive means: for, in case you refuse, we must force you.”

“ KNOW you whom you speak to? whom you threaten? The daughter of Reginald du Bray is not to be treated thus with impunity. Retire in haste, if you regard your own safety; and learn to dread his quick wrath which will soon overtake you.”

“ LADY,” replied the man who had first spoken to her, “ your menaces avail not; we came prepared to hear them, and to meet their effects. You must go with us.”

“ WHITHER?” asked Matilda; “ or what power has a right to force me from the arms and protection of my father?”

“ ONE who has seen and adores thy beauty; one whose love and fondness exceeds that of a father. Pleasures and happiness
“ await

"await you, lady; and your compliance
"with our desire will ensure them."

"I WILL never comply, nor will I be
"forced," said she; endeavouring to retire
to the attendants behind her,

"THEN I must obey my orders," said
he; and seized the hands of the trembling
Matilda. Her damsels, fearless for them-
selves; no sooner saw their beloved mistress
in danger, than their cries made the wood
resound. "Your cries and your resistance
"are equally vain," said the ruffian who
had seized Matilda, while she struggled to
get loose from his grasp. He had forced
her hands behind her, and the other men
had seized her attendants, whom they were
endeavouring also to bind. He had just
began to fasten the delicate hands of Ma-
tilda, had almost effected it by superior
strength and brutal violence, when he re-
ceived a stroke from an unseen arm, that
felled him to the earth. "Learn, slave, to
"respect beauty and virtue where ever you
"meet them." He spoke; and rushing upon
the prostrate caitiff, put his foot on his
throat, and snatching his sword from his
side, exclaimed, "Thy life is too worthless
"a sacrifice; but presume not, on your
"peril,

“ peril, to rise from this spot, or that moment is thy last.” Matilda scarce believed she was free, so sudden was the change. She turned to behold her deliverer: it was the young peasant. She was dumb with pleasure and astonishment. His eyes had no longer that softness with which they adored her but just before: they sparkled wild with rage and indignation, and withered the arm that was uplifted to strike him. His features were no longer composed in the smiles of peace; fury and revenge were visible in his countenance. “ Fear not, lady, my life shall be the hostage of your safety.” He could say no more: the companions of the ruffian had left their prey, and united together to destroy the peasant, who had so rashly intruded, and snatched from their hands the prize of beauty. Matilda’s fears were rather increased than abated, when she saw so many hostile swords lifted against the life of her deliverer; she conceived his generous interposition to have arisen from an abhorrence of the violence used towards her, and conjectured that, unused to arms, he must soon fall beneath the weapons of his foes: but she was much surprized to see him wield the sword with equal skill and valour. The elder peasant, who had spoken

ken to her at their meeting in the wood, had, by this time, joined him, and rendered the conflict more equal. Armed only with his staff, he disabled one of the assailants, and seizing his weapon, joined his companion's side. The ruffian who was first disarmed had now recovered himself, and seeing the two peasants engaged with his associates, thought to revenge his disgrace by the death of his adversary. Rising with the utmost expedition, he drew a dagger, concealed in his under-garment, and hastened towards the spot where they were engaged. Matilda's watchful eye was fixed upon the object of her fears: she saw his motions, and penetrated into his intentions: she uttered a loud scream, that called off the attention of her guardian from the combat. He turned, and saw the danger.—“Base slave, the life I disdained to take before, is now forfeited by thy villainy.” He spoke: his sword, quick as the flash of angry heaven, followed his words. The cloven head of the coward fell asunder, and he dropped lifeless on the earth. Matilda's gentle nature shrunk from the horrid spectacle: she ran, and rejoined her maidens, who stood together, trembling for the fate of their brave deliverer, and offering their vows to heaven for his safety. And he had
 need

need of them: for two men on horseback, hearing the clashing of swords, and the noise of the combat, rode at full speed to the spot where they were engaged, and where the valour of the two peasants had put their foes to flight. "Villain," said he who arrived first, "what brought thee here? or why hast thou opposed these men?"

"BECAUSE," replied the young peasant, to whom his speech was addressed, "they insulted helpless innocence, and violated the retirement of beauty."

"I SEE," rejoined the horseman, "thy base arm has accomplished the death of one of them; thy life shall be the forfeit."

"I WILL not avoid the combat," said the peasant; "let me be armed as thou art, or alight from thy horse, and, if thy valour prevail, let my life atone for his; for be assured I will not shun thy arm."

"THE advantage fortune has given me over thee I will use to the best of my power," replied the horseman, drawing his sword, and clapping spurs to his steed at the same instant. The peasant stood collected

lected in himself, resolved to meet the shock. His trusty staff, which he had not quitted, warded the blow his enemy designed to crush him with. His sword was not idle: he smote the horse on the nostrils; the beast, stung with the pain, no longer obeyed the rider's bit; he flew from the spot with the utmost speed, and scarcely could his master keep his seat. The two peasants approached the other horseman, who was a witness to the defeat of his associate; but he chose to shun the encounter, and turning about, pursued the steps of his companion. Their foes were fled, and the peasants remained masters of the field. "Lady," said the younger, addressing Matilda, "There is no more danger: the cowardice of your enemies has prevented their punishment, and there remains now none but those who would die to serve you."

"Your behaviour, gallant youth," replied the terrified Matilda, "has fully proved the sincerity of your words. It is not in my power to offer you a reward suitable to your deserts; but accompany me to the castle of my father, and he shall satisfy thy utmost wishes: let us leave this dreadful place, we may perhaps be surrounded again with enemies, and what would thy arm avail against numbers?"

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“ It would oppose an host in thy defence, gentle lady. I will see thee to the skirts of this wood, and my eye from thence shall watch thee, till thy safe arrival in thy father’s castle, shall shield thee from all danger; but further I must not go.”

“ WHEREFORE,” said she, as she proceeded homewards, leaning on Martha,—
“ wherefore will you avoid the honours, and the rewards that shall attend the deliverer of the daughter of Reginald? my father is generous, his fame is known; valiant himself, he admires the brave and bold: let me prevail with you to receive the reward of the services thou hast rendered me.”

“ THY father’s name, beauteous lady, is not unknown to me, neither is his fame a stranger to my ears; sufficient for thy vassal is it, that he was near thee in the hour of danger; the remembrance of preserving thy innocence from insult and violation, shall be the reward of thy servant.”

“ THY language and thy demeanor,” said Matilda, stopping short, and regarding him

him with a look that pierced even to his soul, "ill agree with thy habit. It is not
 "seemly for those, whose origin is low, to
 "spurn the offers of their superiors. Few
 "are they, who, in thy station of life, (if
 "thy appearance is to be trusted) would re-
 "fuse the offers of riches and honour. Tell
 "me then, if my conjectures are right."

"WE are not," said the youth, after a small pause, "we are not what we seem."—
 "Then," demanded Matilda, "who are
 "you?"

"FORCE us not, gracious lady, to dis-
 "obey you, by refusing to answer your
 "questions: I may not disclose who I am."

"BE you whom you may, gentle youth,
 "thy qualities and thy virtues, shall meet
 "due attendance and respect beneath my
 "father's hospitable roof: let us have an
 "opportunity of shewing; that our souls
 "are not void of gratitude."

"THY thanks, lady, overpay my deserts.
 "It is enough for me to have endeavour-
 "ed to earn them."

THIS conversation brought them to the edge
 of the wood, that was in sight of the castle.

Again did Matilda press the gallant stranger to accompany her to her father ; and again did he refuse, in the most courteous guise, her earnest solicitations. She took from her finger a ring : " Since you will refuse every request I have hitherto made you," said she, " I must insist on your receiving this trifle from me, a poor mark of my gratitude ; preserve it for my sake." She held it towards him : a blush of joy and rapture suffused his countenance. " I will," said he, dropping on his knee, and receiving it with an air of the most profound respect and awe, " I will preserve it, while I have life or strength to guard it ; and great must be the power that tears it from me." He raised it to his lips, and bowed his head : his looks and actions spoke reverence and submission. Matilda's face was covered with blushes. " Farewell," said she, " gallant youth, farewell. Come Martha, let us hasten to the castle." She walked thitherward with hasty steps ; and as she turned her head, she saw the two companions waiting at the edge of the wood, to see her in safety as they had promised. When she reached her father's walls, they were vanished, and she saw them no more.

MATILDA's countenance retained the marks of horror and affright : her looks did not escape the observance of her father. " What has terrified thee, my child ? or has the hand of sickness seized the darling of my heart ?"

HER spirits, fatigued and oppressed with the terrors she had suffered, no longer could support her; she fell in a swoon on the couch. Her father used every endeavour to recover her; nor were his attempts ineffectual. "Let some of my attendants relate to you what has happened, for I am unable: Martha, relieve my father's uncertainty." The heart of the venerable chief sunk within him at these words. "Be quick!" said he, "and inform me what has befallen Matilda; my fears for her welfare distract me."

MARTHA related every circumstance with care and punctuality. The baron took fire at the insult offered to his daughter. "They shall not escape with impunity, base ruffians!" When she informed him of the gallantry of the young peasant, he could not command his joy; his transports were too great for utterance. "Why did you not bring him with you, Matilda?" said he; "thy father would have rewarded his valour."

"ALAS, I told him so," replied the feeble maid; "but my entreaties were in vain,"

"TRUE valour," rejoined the baron, "boasteth not of itself: modesty is the companion of virtue: but it is my business to find them out, and force them to receive my thanks and my
caresses."

caresses. Ho ! let my knights attend." They appeared at his summons : he explained to them the cause of it. Bring," said he, " the dead man to me ; perhaps we may be able to trace from his garb, or some other circumstance, whom he belonged to, and who was the author of this foul deed : and if ye see two young men in the habits of peasants, in the wood, entreat them, in the most courtecous guise, to follow you ; and if they refuse, bring them before me by force, without hurting their persons : bring whomsoever shall be found in the wood."

THEY armed themselves with speed, and hastened to the spot to which Matilda directed them. He sent out bands of men on foot to search every corner of the wood, and with like orders to bring the peasants before him.

THE sun had left the horizon, the sable garb of night had veiled the earth in darkness, before the messengers returned. Reginald burned with impatience to see the gallant youths : " Where have you delayed so long ?" said he to the knights.

" WE found the spot," said they, " where the combat had been ; the grass was yet wet with blood, but the corpse was removed where we could not find it. We rode on every side, but the villains eluded our search : we saw no human

human soul in the wood, or we would have brought him to thee."

"DETESTED ruffians! they have conveyed away their vile associate, lest he should be known."

"WE have searched," said the servants when they returned, "every dale and dingle of the wood; nor did we see any person whatsoever."

"How ingenious" exclaimed the baron, "are these young men in concealing themselves from my search, and thunning the acknowledgments due to their merit." The baron was vexed and grieved, that he had an opportunity of displaying his munificence in rewarding the deliverers of his child; but he desired her for the future to be more cautious; and she never went from the castle without a guard of faithful domestics.

THE noise of this adventure spread abroad, by the rewards that Reginald offered to any one of the ruffians, who would discover his accomplices, or the person who set them on. It was now time for Ardulph to appear: he repaired to Reginald's castle, and congratulated the baron and his daughter on their lucky escape: he declared his abhorrence of such proceedings; and begged

begged, in case the author of the attempt should be discovered, and prove a knight, that he might have an opportunity of demanding the combat of him; and authorized Reginald to plight his faith for him; and well might he offer such a combat, when he himself had laid the scheme, which was so happily defeated by the valour of the peasants.

EDRIC, the partner and abettor of his crimes, was one of the horsemen who fled at the approach of the gallant rustic. When he appeared before Ardulph, he demanded where was the daughter of his foe.

"IN safety, in the castle of her father," replied Edric.

"DID she not come forth this evening?"

"SHE did: and we had nearly secured her, when the rashness of two peasants, snatched her from our hands: your servants fled, all but one, whom the sword of the enemy deprived of life."

"COWARDS! slaves! base cowards! ye shall feel the weight of my heavy indignation," replied Ardulph, foaming with rage: "what, two boys! two peasant boys! shame and disgrace attend thee: me too you have involved
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in ruin; I shall never be admitted to the sight of the peerless Matilda again. The slave who fell, so deservedly fell, will betray me by his garb; it will be known that he belonged to me, and I shall be driven from the presence of the beauteous maid for ever: if I am, thou diest."

"LET my words assuage the wrath of my lord," replied Edric; "I feared not for myself but you: I joined your fugitive domestics, who were hurrying homewards; I stopped them, and we returned to the spot where the wretched body lay, and removed him from thence to a place of privacy, where we have interred him: and happy was it, that we made such expedition; for a spy, whom I sent to observe if any body came near the place we had just left, narrowly escaped the knights of Reginald, who were sent with a design to bring the carcass off. Every thing is yet secret and safe."

"THY wisdom has saved, what thy fears betrayed: it is well, Edric, the most brave will be sometimes repulsed, and fortune will not be commanded, but what steps must I pursue to acquit myself in the eyes of Reginald and his daughter." "A too forward zeal may betray you," said the wilely Edric; "when the noise of the adventure is bruited abroad, then will it be time enough for Ardulph to offer his service to Reginald; and, under the show of friendship,

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to effect the destruction of the house of his father's foes." "Thy words are balm to my afflicted soul; thy counsels are good, and shall be followed;" and little difficulty was there in imposing on the unsuspecting and generous Reginald. He was pleased with the society of Ardulph, who was a constant and welcome guest at his castle; and he failed not, upon every occasion, to shew his affection and respect for Matilda, without avowing it publicly. She, on the contrary, had her mind engrossed solely with the remembrance of the peasant: she held many conferences with the faithful Martha about him, and in vain endeavoured to investigate his actions, or to find out his person; but she could not help wishing in secret, that if heaven designed her to become a wife, her lord might resemble the young stranger.

At the demise of Henry, his crown descended to the renowned Edward. He ascended the throne of his ancestors: his happy subjects felt the effects of his virtues, and blessed the hour that gave them such a king. He had been in possession of the throne near twelve months, when the barons, who had been with him in the Holy Land, proclaimed solemn jousts and tournaments to be held, in honour of their liege lord. Among these, Reginald was the foremost; and proclaimed them to be held at
his

his castle: and numerous were the knights that came to do him honour, and submit to his determination. Amongst these Ardulph, was the most forward in preparing sumptuous armour and gorgeous apparel. He depended on his prowess and skill, to bear him through the dangers of the day, with honour and success. He panted for the trial of his courage, and longed to prove himself superior to all the knights in feats of arms, in the presence of his mistress. That day, so long expected by him, and so ardently wished for, came at last. Reginald, attended by the judges and the heralds, surveyed the ground. The ladies who honoured the solemnity with their presence, were placed on a scaffold on one side of the lists. Among these Matilda shone, the brightest star in the galaxy of beauty. The heralds were at the barriers, the trumpets were sounded, when Ardulph appeared and demanded entrance. The barriers were lifted up; and he presented himself on a white steed, that seemed to spurn the ground he trod on. Ardulph tempered his fire with judgment, and sat him so well, that the horse and rider seemed but one body. On his shield was painted a lion couchant, and seeming to sleep; under it, the words, *Tis death to rouse me.* His armour was of a piece with his shield: the artificer, with excellent cunning, had so contrived

trived his armour, that it represented the tawny hide of the fierce lord of the getulian forest. His helmet resembled the head of that formidable beast: the fangs grinned horrid over his crest; the paws were spread over his shoulder; and the talons were of massy gold. He was attended by two esquires, bearing, as well as their master, the colours of the beautiful Matilda: they were white, the emblem of her innocence; and of a pale green, such as the buds in the infancy of the spring delight in, ere they burst into leaf. His gallant appearance and manly deportment gained the applause of all the spectators: nor were they deceived in him; for in that day he unhorsed and vanquished all the knights that opposed him, and carried away the glory of the field. At night, Reginald entertained the combatants sumptuously in his castle, where his courteous behaviour made the vanquished knights forget their disgrace, and inspired those who had not tried the fortune of the field, with fresh courage and emulation, in hopes of rendering themselves worthy of the notice and attention of their host. The eyes of the whole company were turned on Ardulph and Matilda: his particular distinction in wearing her colours, and the care he had taken in preparing himself, plainly shewed he aimed at no vulgar conquest. The
tongues

tongues of the beholders were not weary of praising him, or the eye of viewing him. He concealed, under the veil of humility, his pride and arrogance; and in public, he attributed to fortune the success that had attended his arms. This conduct rendered him more amiable, and added to his glory in the opinion of every body but Matilda: she thought his humility affected; she perceived his self-sufficiency break through the cloud of modesty that endeavoured in vain to hide it. The pretended peasant still filled her thoughts; she wished him, in secret, to enter the lists and contest the prize of glory with Ardulph; she doubted not of his success; for she had seen such marks of his courage and prowess, as made her think him invincible. In vain did she wish, fortune sided with the knight of the lion: the second day augmented his glory, and added to his victories. He was elated with success: his antagonists were vanquished, and his was the sole honour. The prize was just about to be adjudged to him, when an esquire delivered him a billet; he opened it and read these words.

THE UNKNOWN KNIGHT, TO THE
KNIGHT OF THE LION.

THE fame of thy exploits, hath excited
emulation, not envy: thy prowess hath
crowned

crowned thee with glory, and tempted me to challenge thee to the lists. To-morrow morning will I meet thee, when rest has refreshed thee, and thou hast overcome the fatigues of this day's toils. If thou should'st vanquish me, the conquest will encrease thy fame; or if mine should be the fortune of the field, great will be the glory of,

THE UNKNOWN KNIGHT.

ARDULPH's eyes sparkled with anger and impatience as he read this billet. "Tell the unknown knight," said he with precipitation, "that this is the best time to decide the contest; here I await him."—
"Sir knight, answered the squire, my lord foresaw that your courage would not brook this delay, and commanded me to say, that he cannot meet thee till the morning sun shall gild the skies. He added, it would fully the glory of his arms, if he should enter the lists with a knight, who had performed such exploits in the day as must fatigue him; and the more especially, if the knight of the lion should fall beneath his arm."—"Tell him from me, there is yet strength and vigour enough in this arm to make him repent his presumption, in challenging me to the combat: but it is well and prudent in him to delay so long the punishment of his rashness."

“ nefs.” ‘ I will tell him,’ replied the squire, making a low obeifance and retiring. This unexpected billet reduced Ardulph, already victorious, to the necessity of trying the doubtful issue of the field again, although his confidence assured him of success, and he already hated, in his heart, the man, who could even attempt to snatch the glory he had already acquired from him. The expectations of all were turned upon the contest of the ensuing day: the knights, who had been already overthrown, hoped to see their conqueror vanquished; yet each magnified the power by which he himself had been subdued. Matilda was pleased at this new antagonist which threatened Ardulph. She foresaw evils arising from his success, that menaced her happiness. How often did she wish that this unknown knight might prove the peasant! and how sincerely did she pray to heaven to strengthen his arm!

THE evening was spent in rejoicing: the voice of music cheered the hearts of the assembly; the knights led the ladies through the mazes of the sprightly dance, and forgot their disasters in the presence of beauty. Ardulph was honoured with the hand of Matilda: yet in vain were the sounds of joy; in vain to him was the presence of beauty displayed! the gloom of discontent hung

hung on his brow, and his aspect betrayed the emotions of his heart. In vain did he assume a chearfulness that ill agreed with his disposition; and in spite of his endeavours his hilarity gave way to his rage and concern. The iquires of Ardulph were busy in preparing his armour, and dressing his steed: he himself lay expecting the approach of the morn and his adversary, with an impatience, suggested and preserved by pride and hatred: fully was he determined, if an opportunity offered, to make the issue of the contest fatal, and, under the name of an accident, to slay the man who had so presumptuously challenged him to the field.

THE morning so eagerly expected came. The rising sun gilded the tops of the hills, and gladdened the plains, when Ardulph prepared himself for the combat. The concourse of people was greater on this than any other day. The ladies had taken their seats; the judges and heralds were at their appointed stations, when Ardulph entered the field on one side, and at the same instant the unknown knight entered on the other. He was mounted on a steed of a bright bay colour; his mane and tail were black: by his neighing and curvetting, he seemed to court danger, as well as display his agility and strength. The knight's armour was black;
his

his impress was the sun in a cloud, which obscured his lustre; under it, the words, *But for a time*: he was attended with one squire only. His armour so plain, and his scanty retinue gave the vulgar no opinion of his valour, whose minds are ever captivated with outward shew: but the judges, and those who were skilled in knightly accomplishments, thought better of him, from his manner of fitting his horse, and bearing his lance. He rode towards the place where the ladies were seated, and paid his devoirs to them with such a grace, as charmed the assembly. Matilda was not without hopes, when she saw the disguise of this knight, and the device on his shield, that he might be the peasant who had delivered her in the wood: there was a mystery in the motto, that she thought was intelligible to her alone: her humanity made her take a part in the former combats of the contending knights; but in this she was more particularly interested, and her heart panted with anxiety and doubt.

THE unknown knight accosted Ardulph: "The world will accuse me of temerity in attacking so renowned a knight; but the desire of glory is a laudable ambition."—"If your's should be the fortune of the day," said Ardulph, "it may well be accounted glory and honour in you, to have vanquished me. But if thou fall beneath my arm, small will be the
H reputation

reputation I shall acquire, in having subdued one who is unknown, and without a name in arms?—"If I should yield to thy prowess," replied the knight, "thou wilt know me; but assure thyself, I am not unknown, nor without my fame in deeds of chivalry."—"Then why comest thou thus," retorted Ardulph, "under a vile disguise, to attempt to rob me of my well-earned fame? it is base; but be thou whom thou mayest, thou shalt sink beneath the power of Ardulph, shall swell his glory, and increase his triumph."—"To the proof," said the unknown knight, retiring to his station, as Ardulph did to his. The trumpets sounded, and the knights began their course; in which the unknown knight warded the lance of Ardulph with equal skill and dexterity; and passing his own lightly over his casque, plainly shewed his advantage and superiority. Ardulph was sensible of it, and the reflection stung him to the soul: his pride was alarmed, and his rage encreased. On the second course, he set his lance more firmly in the rest, and, spurring his steed at the same time, thought to put a speedy end to the combat: the unknown knight saw his mortal intention, and, with agility and judgment, avoided the design. He collected himself to receive the shock. They shivered their lances to pieces, and neither received any injury: though as the advantage was in the first course on the side of the stranger, so
in

in the second, it was adjudged to Ardulph: They chose fresh staves, and the unknown knight picked out the strongest and heaviest he could get: he saw the malice of his antagonist, and perceived the last stroke was aimed at his life. It ceased to be a contention for glory; especially, where the skill and valour of his enemy rendered him formidable. The trumpets sounded to the third charge. The stranger began his course, and, giving spurs to his steed, who seemed little to want such incitement to speed, he couched his lance, and met Ardulph with so rough a shock, that maugre all his endeavours, he bore him over the crupper of his saddle, and left him on the earth, bruised sorely with his fall, and speechless thro' rage and indignation. The unknown knight stopped his horse in the middle of his career; and alighting, tore the colours of Matilda from the helmet of the vanquished Ardulph, and placed them in his own; then vaulting on his steed, who stood still to receive his master, and shewed his joy, by his neighing and prancing when he bore his weight, he again rode towards the place where the ladies were witnesses of his triumph; and, making a low obeisance, turned off to the barrier he entered at. Reginald perceived his intention of departing, and stood in his way. "You have overcome the accomplished Ardulph, Sir knight," said he; "and your's is the glory of the day: do not
H 2 depart

depart from us; but let us have an opportunity of paying you that respect, due to your valour and merit: let this castle afford you some refreshment, and do honour to its lord, by partaking of his feast.”—“Permit me, noble Reginald,” replied the stranger, “to avoid thy courtesy: reasons, of high import, prevent my making myself known to you, and require concealment. My thanks are due to you for your hospitable invitation; but as I came here unknown, relying on the faith of knighthood, so I hope to depart.”—“Ill would it become me,” replied the baron, “to force you with ungentle discourtesy, to discover yourself, when you wish concealment; I have only to lament that I have not the happiness of being known to so accomplished a knight, or want worth to merit his confidence.”—“No, generous Reginald,” said the stranger, “no; it is from no such cause I desire to be unknown: accuse not yourself of want of worth, nor me with want of discernment to acknowledge it: be assured on the faith of a true knight, I will soon discover myself to you, but it must be in a more private manner.”—“Be it at your will,” replied Reginald; “whenever it happens, I shall be glad to convince you how much I admire you.” He made a signal, the barriers were lifted up, and the stranger went off amidst the acclamations of the multitude.

AN HISTORICK TALE. 61

IN the mean time, the squires of Ardulph were busied in raising their lord from the ground. The last action of his conqueror, satisfied him he was a rival: this added to his rage and thirst of revenge. "Edric," said he, "pursue the knight that hath heaped shame and ruin upon thy lord; find him out; enter into his counsels; and obtain some means of bringing him into my power, or never again see the face of Ardulph." Edric bowed obedience to his lord's commands, without replying: he left him in the care of his other esquire; and, mingling with the crowd, changed his garment with one of the menial servants of the house, and pursued the steps of the unknown knight.

THE servants had raised Ardulph, and taken off his helmet, when Reginald approached him. "You see me, Reginald," said the furious Ardulph; "you see me covered with shame, confusion, and disgrace; my arms are needless to me now. Shave me, and hide this inglorious head beneath a cowl; the only garb that becomes the recreant Ardulph. Buried is my fame; tarnished is my glory; and sunk for ever my name in arms."—"Be consoled," said the courteous Reginald; "it was no common arm that overthrew you; the issue of the field is ever doubtful, and there is no man but what is liable to be overcome: great is the glory you have acquired; nor can it be tarnished by one misfortune."

misfortune.'—"It is to me," replied Ardulph; "to be overcome, to me is death: shame will cloath me; disgrace will attend me: no more must I pretend to cope with men, or enter the lists of honour with the mighty. No, it is fitter for me inglorious, to assume a peasant's habit, and till the earth.—Curse on this nerveless arm, that could not defend its master, or obey the dictates of his heart."—"It is the part of wisdom to bear bad, as well as good fortune with moderation," said the baron; "another day will be thine: come, valiant knight, come to the castle, and in the joys of society, we will endeavour to obliterate the remembrance of misfortune."—"No," replied Ardulph, "I never can, I never shall forget this day; this cursed day, that has robbed me of my fame and my happiness. No, Reginald, thanks for thy courtesy; I will retire, and hide my head in solitude, till the memory of my shame is no more. Let the happy seek pleasure; it is mine to shun it. No day like this will ever come again; no day so replete with misery and disgrace to the wretched Ardulph. Cease intreating me to continue with you, for my resolution is taken and cannot be altered." Reginald left him. He mounted his horse, and without taking notice of any body, with dejection in his countenance, and despondence in his heart, bent his way towards his own castle.

MEAN time, Matilda sat lost in thought, contemplating the scene transacted before her: the mysterious motto on the stranger's shield, and her own wishes, conspired to make her believe it was the disguised peasant, who had ventured himself in the field against Ardulph. His singular behaviour in taking the colours from Ardulph, which he had prided himself in wearing, confirmed her suspicions; which were still corroborated, by his determining to remain unknown. Her face was covered with a deep blush, when she saw him take the ribbons from Ardulph. She watched him to see if she could discover any traces, by which she might know him; but in vain; for, except in his obeisances to the gallery where the ladies were placed, they had little opportunity of contemplating him. His abrupt departure filled her with concern; as she had hopes that he would have discovered himself with so favourable an opportunity. She returned to her father's castle, and in vain endeavoured to banish from her memory, the scenes that had been presented to her eyes: in vain she strove to forget him in the festivity of the time; he returned to her imagination in spite of all she could do, and she longed for the hour of solitude to communicate to her favourite Martha, her sentiments concerning the valiant unknown. The conversation of the guests of the castle, was filled with the praises of the stranger, and the pride of Ardulph, who could not submit to fortune.

64 REGINALD DU BRAY:

THUS they passed their hours, while Ar-
dolph retired to his castle, overwhelmed with
grief and shame, and vowing destruction on the
cause of his disgrace. Him the crafty Edric
pursued on horseback, till he saw him enter a
lonely house, that stood on the edge of a forest,
near six miles from the castle of Reginald. Edric
quitted his horse, and turned him loose; then
running from thence, he covered himself with
dust, and arrived at the door of the house breath-
less, and in appearance faint with fatigue. A
servant saw him and demanded of him what he
wanted. "I want" said Edric, "to see the
knight whom I have followed here, and who
will not refuse to listen to the tale of misfortune."
'you cannot see him now,' replied the servant;
'he reposes himself from the fatigue of arms.'
"Then here will I wait," said Edric, "till I
see him, and throw myself at his feet." Enter
then, said the servant, 'and you may have an
opportunity of seeing him: my lord is mild as
the dew of heaven, and gentle as the breath of
the spring.' Edric followed the attendant, who
put refreshments of food before him, and quenched
his thirst; then going up to his lord, related
the circumstance. "Thou hast done well,"
said Edmund, "let the wants of the needy be
ever supplied; and turn not the unfortunate
from the door; when he is satisfied, let me see
him." Edric obeyed the summons almost in-
stantly, he found the knight in his chamber, at-
tended

tended by Alwin his faithful squire; but who had not accompanied him to the castle of Reginald. "Young man," said he to Edric, "what hast thou to unfold to me? my ear is ever open to the complaints of the wretched, and my hand, is not slow to relieve his wants: speak your woes, and hope for redress." Edric gazed a-while on him, with an air of astonishment and awe; then falling on his knees, "May heaven," said he, folding his hands, and lifting up his eyes; "may heaven pour down endless blessings on thy head: may thy days be happy; and may thy arm be ever victorious! so shalt thou escape the miseries that fill the hours of thy vassal with sorrow and woe!" Tears ran down his cheeks as he spoke. "Rise, unhappy youth," says Edmund! "unfitting is it for man to receive the adoration that should be paid only to the MOST HIGH. Rise from that humble posture, and inform me of the cause of thy distress."

THE subtle Edric rose, and wiping away the tears that coursed away each other, began the tale of guile and falsehood—"Few have been the days of thy servant," said he, "yet great has been my affliction; and many are the woes I have suffered—My father was, and, if he yet lives, is, a vassal of Lord Ardulph—That Lord Ardulph, whom, to the joy of all good men, your invincible arm overthrew. His house was near the castle of his Lord, and thither would he
I frequently

frequently retire after the chase, to taste such humble refreshments as our poor and simple dwelling could afford. Two were the children of my father, myself, and a sister younger by a year; rich only in the endowments of nature; for, if the report of the country was to be allowed, she excelled all the maidens of the neighbourhood in beauty. That, and her unspotted innocence, was all her dowry. While I followed the more laborious business of the field, she performed all the domestic duties; for our mother had long since laid asleep with her fathers. Her comeliness excited the admiration and love of our fellow-swains: they all strove to win her in the honest way of marriage; but she despised their courtship, and refused to listen to them, lest she should be tempted to quit her father, whose grey hairs claimed the duty and affection of his children. Happy was our time, till Lord Ardulph resorted to our humble cottage, and chearful were our days, till the hand of violence spoiled us of all our joys, and all our peace. My unsuspecting father rejoiced in the presence of his young Lord. He had been long a faithful vassal of his father, who yet lived. Ardulph ever praised his fidelity, and promised to promote me in his service, or add to the extent of lands we held under him. My old father, anxious for the welfare and happiness of his children, welcomed him to his poor habitation, though warned by one of the suitors of my sister. I informed

formed my father of my suspicions; and that it was for another cause than he imagined that Lord Ardulph visited him so frequently. Vain were my admonitions; for my father would not hear a word that reflected on the honour of his Lord. However, I took care to be present at his next interview with my sister; and his behaviour confirmed my suspicions. His eye darted flames: his hand trembled, when she reached him the simple beverage she had prepared for him; and his whole conduct was such as could not escape the notice of the observer. Again I warned my father, again he despised my monitions. The father of Ardulph died, and we became the vassals of our present Lord. He had not failed to visit us in the house of his prosperity: and he made good his promises, by granting us more lands, held at an easy tenure. His distant behaviour to our sister lulled us into security; and my father reproached me for harbouring any suspicions of the generous Ardulph. The stroke, so long in preparing, nevertheless came at last. It was in the height and jollity of harvest. The full-ear'd grain fell beneath our sickles. The lusty reapers sweated in the noon-day sun; and my reverend father cheered us with his company and his rustic mirth. My sister at home prepared the repast, to refresh us at our return from the toils of the field. The sun was set, the weary labourers sought rest: we bent our way homeward, and

the remembrance of our fatigue was sweetened by the hope of our enjoying the plentiful, tho' homely and simple cheer that was provided for us. We arrived at the house. The doors were all open. We entered: all was lonely and silent." 'Where's my child?' "demanded my father, with a wildness in his looks and accent. We called, we searched every place; but no answer was made to our cries, and no success attended our enquiries. My father, in an agony of grief, threw himself on the earth, and tore his silver hairs from his aged head. He refused comfort or refreshment of any kind; for, uncertain of the situation of his favourite, he was dead to every enjoyment in life. The next day, however, put an end to our fears. An old woman, who lived at some distance from us, was sent on purpose to inform us, that my sister was safe and well. We enquired of her in what manner she received the intelligence; and where she saw her, or heard of her. The broken and confused account she rendered us, enabled me to trace her steps; and I learned at last that she was in the hands of Lord Ardulph, who had hidden her in a place beyond our reach. My father immediately repaired to his castle; but conscious of the injury he had done him, he refused him admittance to his presence. The wretched old man poured forth unavailing lamentations, and returned to his cottage overwhelmed with grief and sorrow.

row.

AN HISTORICK TALE. 69

row. He resolved, nevertheless, to see him, and try to move him to restore the unhappy Eleanor. For a long time we sought in vain the opportunity. At last it arrived. One of the domestics informed us of his Lord's intentions of walking out. We crossed his path, and threw ourselves before him.—‘ Oh, let my Lord behold and pity the sorrows of his vassal. My daughter, my daughter. Oh, Lord Ardulph, restore my child. She was the joy of my heart, the comfort and the support of my declining years. She is snatched from me; and my grey hairs will come down to the grave in sorrow.’ “ What does the dotard mean,” demanded Lord Ardulph? ‘ You have taken away my child,’ continued my father, ‘ You have robbed me of all my happiness. She was the sweetest flower, Lord Ardulph, in the garden. You have taken from me the treasure of her youth, and the innocence of her life. Yet return her to me, blasted and rifled as she is, and I will yet clasp her to my bosom, and we’ll sit together, and weep over the misfortunes that are past. We will strive to forget them. Oh, Lord Ardulph, thou hadst a father, and may be a parent yourself. Think of my distress.’ “ Thou ravest,” replied the haughty, cruel Ardulph. “ Thy insolence and presumption merit punishment, but thy grey hairs screen thee from my resentment. Fly hence instantly; and as you value your safety, appear no more

more in my presence." "Yet let me speak." "I will hear no more. And if you presume a second time on my patience, expect my heavy vengeance to burst on thy head."—I left my miserable father prostrate on the earth, weeping and lamenting the loss of his daughter. I raised and endeavoured to comfort him. From that time, as Lord Ardulph was not to be moved with our solicitations, I determined to have recourse to stratagems and wiles. All day I watched the steps of Lord Ardulph. The dew of heaven has washed this head, and the tempests and darkness of the night have surrounded me, while I sought to trace him to the place in which he concealed my hapless sister. My vigilance and perseverance baffled all his precautions and art; and I found the house he resorted to. It was situated in an obscure dingle, and so artfully was hidden, that it was almost impossible to discover it. I waited all night for his coming forth in the morning; and when I saw him at a distance, rushed into the house which I imagined contained my sister. I was not mistaken. She shrieked at the sight of her brother, and hid her face with her hands. Ah! Eleanor, said I, well may you endeavour to avoid the sight of that brother whom you have made so wretched. My father too." "Oh!" said she, interrupting me, "lives he? Oh! what has my poor father done in my absence?"—"Poured forth his prayers for the safety and welfare

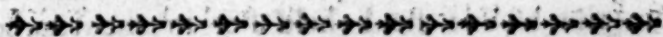
welfare of his darling child, who, regardless of her virtue or her fame, lives willingly in a state of harlotry." "My brother might have well spared that reproach," said she, and she burst into tears as she spoke. "Why, is it not true? and wherefore should I not reproach you? but answer me truly. Is it with your consent you came here, and do you remain here willingly?" "Neither, neither," replied the unhappy Eleanor; I was dragged from my father's friendly roof; by violence I am the victim of brutal force." "Then follow me, and I will lead thee to a place of safety and happiness." "I will," said she, "and bless thee for ever as my deliverer. But let me first lay aside these cloaths which I have been obliged to wear, and assume my own humble weeds." "She made haste to quit the hated mansion. A neighbouring convent sheltered her from the violence and iniquity of Ardulph. I then made my father acquainted with the steps I had taken, and waited in patience the breaking of Lord Ardulph's rage upon us. It was not long delayed. The next morning he came himself to the cottage he had robbed of all its happiness. He met my father. 'You have succeeded then, thou hoary traitor, in stealing from me all my joy. But thou and thy son shall feel the effects of my rage and resentment.' "I am prepared," my father replied, "to meet the storm. I know my child is safe from thy power, and I am re-
gardless

gardless of myself."—When Lord Ardulph found that my father knew where his daughter had been taken and secreted, he changed his threats into promises of favour; and offered every thing which he thought could bribe the old man to discover the place of her retreat. But all in vain. The next day, therefore, he turned him out of his house, and deprived him of all his goods. Me he vowed to destroy, and even sent out men to kill me. I had no recourse left but to fly to the castle of Reginald Du Bray, with whom Lord Ardulph was then at enmity. Here I resided in quiet and safety, till he made his peace with Lord Reginald, and visited at his castle; then I was obliged to quit my asylum. In the days of the tournaments I mixed with the crowd, and saw with sorrow his success. I sent up my prayers to heaven to wither the ravisher's arm, and confound his strength. This day my prayers have been heard, and your arm has laid him low. I followed you to sue for protection and for shelter. Thus have I been reduced by the power of Lord Ardulph; and, to crown my misfortunes, I am ignorant of what is the fate of my father. Forgive me, for taking up your time with a recital of my misfortunes; but happy shall I be if thou wilt receive me into thy service." Tears fell from the eyes of the false Edric, as he finished his fairy tale.

Feigned

Feigned only as to himself, though it was true as to the actions of Lord Ardulph, who had done to another what Edric had represented to have been done to himself.

END OF THE SECOND BOOK.



B O O K III.

LORD Edmund remained silent for a time. "Alwin," said he to his squire, "how melancholy a reflection is it, that power and wealth should only inspire us with a desire of committing, and give us an opportunity of perpetrating more effectually the basest crimes. I will endeavour, young man," said he, turning to Edric, "to make thee forget the woes Lord Ardulph has brought upon thee. Be safe and happy: nay more; find out thy father, and I will make his future days easy and peaceful." Edric fell on his knees before Lord Edmund. He implored blessings on his head; and, from that hour, devoted himself to his service, in the most solemn manner. He retired from his presence rejoiced at his success; and, at the moment the generous Edmund was relieving his supposed distress, the

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treacherous

treacherous heart of Edric was planning the destruction of his benefactor; and he was the more excited to revenge his master, as he found, in Edmund, the peasant who had defeated his scheme on Matilda, and the knight who had overthrown him.

EDMUND's heart had surrendered itself prisoner to Matilda's charms, when he saw her in the wood: he beheld her in the triumph of beauty, presiding at the castle of her father: he had mingled with the crowd, and escaped her observation, though his eyes were ever fixed upon her. He saw with concern, that Ardulph was victorious in the courses of two days; and it gave him the greater uneasiness, as the report of the common people, proclaimed him a suitor to Matilda. He dispatched his squire for his armour, and forbade Alwin to attend him to the lists, because he had been his companion in the wood, and must have discovered him to the penetration of Matilda. He chose another of his followers to supply that place; and entered the combat with a desire of vanquishing a rival who pretended to Matilda. The glow of joy which appeared in her face at his success, gave him the most promising hopes. He determined to be the only person who should reveal to her, the secret of his transformation. He sickened with desire, to see the charming maid, the object of all his wishes, the mistress of his heart and affections.

It was autumn: the yellow harvest had fallen beneath the sickle of the reaper; the woods yet retained their leafy covering, though they had lost their verdure; but they had a thousand various shades, which, gilded by the rays of the setting sun, gave a milder and more delightful aspect to the forest. Lord Ardulph was confined to his castle with chagrin, mortification, and rage. Matilda walked forth, to take her leave of the beauteous year: she entered the wood, accompanied by her maidens, but leaning on the faithful Martha. "Here it was first," said she, "we saw those generous peasants, if peasants they were, who risked their lives in our defence, and so bravely extricated us from danger: with what grace did the younger refuse my invitations to the castle of my father! why has he never appeared since to demand my gratitude?" The sound of a voice interrupted her: she stopped and trembled, for she had not forgot her former danger; but it was so plaintive, that she could not avoid obeying the dictates of her heart, the mansion of pity, to learn the cause of the distress. She bent her steps towards the place whence the voice proceeded; but hearing something like an attempt to sing, curiosity detained her, while these words were sung in a voice that proved it was a man who sung, but had such sweetness and melody, that it might, but for its strength, have been mistaken for a woman's voice.

Absence, the foe of every fond desire,
 Prolongs its stay, and robs my soul of rest;
 Yet absence vainly strives to quench the fire,
 Almighty love has kindled in my breast.
 What can her presence than her absence more?
 Absent, my thoughts are fix'd on her alone;
 Present, I could but silently adore,
 To the sweet maid my passion is unknown:
 But whether here she bides or far away,
 My heart, soul, thought's with her, and her
 alone must stay.

Rise shades of darkness, rise, and quench the
 light:

When she's away, no lack of day I find;
 More dear to me the sable veil of night,
 Her image solely then employs my mind;
 No other object then can intervene
 To rob my soul of that sublime delight;
 When by these eyes the fair one is not seen,
 Oh! what avails to me the use of sight?
 She, she alone, should every sense employ,
 She, who to every sense can yield the purest joy.

MATILDA stood lost in attention and surprise. When the person had finished his song, he spoke, "Come Alwin," said he, "this is about the time, and perhaps we may be happy enough to see her." He rose from the ground, where he had been sitting; and Matilda could perceive him, though she herself remained unseen.

seen. What was her joy and pleasure, yet mingled with a painful modesty, blushing at her own most secret thoughts, when she beheld in the songster, the young peasant, whom she was so much indebted to. She saw he came towards the place where she stood; but she had not the power to fly from him: she remained where she was, agitated by a variety of thoughts. Edmund, when he first perceived her, was rendered incapable of moving: he gazed at her with eager admiration: she was now more lovely than ever. He at length collected himself, and drawing near her, fell on his knees before her. "Pardon, adorable lady, pardon my presumption in appearing in your presence." — "Rise," said she; "you can have committed no offence, by that only; I am rather pleased to see you, that I may have an opportunity of shewing you how far my father's gratitude will extend to the man, who has done such services to his child." — "I cannot receive the favours of your father, lady, nor can I rise from this humble posture, till I shall have obtained your forgiveness." — "In nothing have you offended me, but in thus humbling yourself before me, when I have desired you to rise." He arose and stood before her, hardly venturing to behold the face of the lovely maid; but whenever he suffered his eyes to stray from the ground, they spoke the love, the awe, and respect, his soul was fraught with, and her presence inspired. She
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signed to her attendants to retire: they all obeyed but the faithful Martha, whom she retained. Alwin the friend of Edmund kept at a distance. "Tell me," continued she, "how you have offended me, and why you seek a pardon for a crime, that I am unconscious of your having committed, or why do you thus deprecate my anger? be open, be sincere, and if you have really offended, it will be the only method of obtaining my forgiveness."—"Ah!" replied Edmund, with a sigh, "my obedience shall convince the charming Matilda, how weighty are her commands, and how worthy to be obeyed; when, by complying with them, I shall be obliged to accuse myself: yet it is her desire, and I yield. Know then, gentle lady, since I first beheld you in this wood, where you now again bless my sight, I had the presumption to appear in arms before you, though unknown to you. It was I who encountered the happy, the gallant Ardolph: It was this arm that vanquished him: yet more happy was he in his fall, to be lamented by the daughter of Reginald, than the wretched Edmund in the midst of his triumph. That is my crime, that is my offence; and it is inexpiable in me, who have lifted my hand against a knight favoured by you; and by my rashness and presumption, merited your displeasure, and caused your grief. But thus throwing myself on your mercy, let me intreat a mitigation of my punishment. Do not

not banish me from your presence ; do not prohibit me to see you, and I will in all things else submit to your decree.' He stopped speaking : an heart-felt sigh rent his bosom, and the tear of distress trembled in his eye. Matilda saw and pitied his grief. " I know not why you should think that you have offended me in opposing Ardulph," said Matilda ; " my father's lists were free to all knights to try the fortune of the field."—" But Ardulph wore the colours of Matilda."—" True," replied the blushing maid ; " but it was without my consent or knowledge." ' What a crime then have I escaped, for I could never have forgiven myself for having lifted my hand against the object of your favour : nor could I, beauteous lady, suffer any one to carry away the prize of honour, without striving to contest it with him in the presence of her, whose smiles are praise, and whose applause is glory.' He feared to have said too much, and Matilda was unwilling to understand him. " There is now," replied she, " a stronger motive than ever, to press you to return with me to my father's castle : he is accounted no bad judge of knightly merit ; and I have ever heard him praise the prowess of the unknown knight."—" Oh, lady," rejoined Edmund, " it is impossible. I cannot, I must not accept thy invitation ; and powerful must be my reasons, when I would risque every other hazard but the loss of my honour, to see the daughter of Reginald du Bray."

Bray.—“ Alas, Sir knight, this is a language I must not hear; my father’s approbation must sanctify the vows of him who pretends to Matilda.” She found her face covered with blushes as she spoke: her idea of the man who had so gallantly defended her, and who, in the defeat of Ardulph, had made so public a declaration of his passion, was still uppermost in her mind; and the innocence of her heart caused the unguarded expressions of her tongue. “ Then despair, Edmund, despair and eternal woe must be thy portion: but depart not from me till thou hearst what I have yet to say. The words of falsehood are strangers to the tongue of Edmund; the thoughts of deceit are unknown to his heart. The fame of thy beauty reached my ears, and I longed to know if report had done justice to thy merit; I came in disguise, and found your charms surpassed the account that had been given me of them. From the moment I saw you, when, speechless with surprise, I knelt before you, and adored the power of your resistless beauties; from that moment I loved, but with no common passion.”—“ Stop,” said Matilda, interrupting him; “ forfeit not the good opinion I entertained of you, nor obliterate the remembrance of the obligations I am under to you: the conduct you pursue will not permit me to remain here any longer, or suffer me to hear you any more. Farewell.” She turned from him hastily, and rejoining her attendants,

attendants, took her way to the castle. Edmund, motionless with grief and despair at her words, pursued her with his eyes, as long as he could see her; and when he no longer viewed the adorable maid, he kept his eyes fixed on the path she had taken. Alwin seeing him alone approached him. "Why do we remain here?" said he; "the lady is retired, and the shades of night encompass us."—"It will be always night with Edmund: the sun of beauty is set to me, and darkness and horrors succeed."—"Yet let us return," rejoined the squire; "when the scene is no longer present to you, the remembrance of her charms will be no more."—"I will follow thee, Alwin, but her image will be ever present to me."

EDMUND passed the night in a state of the greatest inquietude. Many schemes did he revolve in his mind; the only design of them was to see Matilda, and implore her pardon. They were all fruitless, all abortive in the wretched lover's imagination. With the first light he bade Edric attend him. Edric appeared. He questioned him concerning the state of Reginald's castle; the situation of that part assigned to his daughter, and what prospect it commanded. Edric, who was the constant companion of Ardolph in his visits to the castle, had not failed to inform himself of these particulars for his master's service; and repeated to Edmund the intelligence he had gained. It

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was with pleasure he heard that her apartments overlooked the little plain that lay between the castle and the wood. Here then he determined to present himself before her constantly, till pity for his woes should induce her to listen to him with patience. He determined that Edric should be the future companion of his walks, as he was acquainted with every avenue to the castle, and from his knowledge of the country might be serviceable to him.

MATILDA was not more at ease, since the discovery of Edmund's sentiments, than he was: she could not lose his image a moment; and a thousand graces that inspired his whole form when he spoke to her, only served to fix his idea more indelibly in her mind. She could have acknowledged to him that she was pleased with his person, and charmed with his conduct; but her modesty, and the delicacy and decorum of her sex, forbade her tongue to indulge the sentiments of her heart; not even to Martha, the favoured Martha did she reveal the more tender notions she had conceived: she blushed at harbouring them, even in private, and dreaded lest she had transgressed the strict rules of modesty, in venturing to indulge such thoughts in secret, and infringed her duty to her father, by entertaining a favourable opinion of a man that had not been recommended to her by that beloved and honoured parent. In this turn of mind, she cast her eyes from the
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window of her apartment, where she sat employed in works befitting her sex, towards the wood, where the evening before she had seen the man, whose image was now her constant companion, and she thought her sight had deceived her, when she perceived the appearance of two men, walking by the edge of the wood; they were habited like peasants, and she remembered the form of one of them too well, not to recollect him even at that distance. She concealed her confusion at the sight, and avoided going near the window, or giving any signs that she encouraged the pursuits of a man who was unknown to her, and who so obstinately refused to make himself known to her father. She thought that a seasonable severity would make him relinquish his enterprize; especially, if he was one who had a greater regard for her father's wealth than her esteem. But she was mistaken in Edmund. He was daily at the same spot, expecting the lovely Matilda to appear in the wood again.

THE winter approached, clad in storms, and attended by tempests. The constant breast of Edmund defied them all. The hope of seeing Matilda, enabled him to sustain the weather's roughest shock; and undaunted brave the fury of the season. Matilda did not behold his perseverance without emotion: she pitied his sufferings, and wished to see him released from so strict and painful an attendance: yet she had no

means of forbidding him to punish himself thus, but through the intervention of Martha. She had for a long time noticed the constant appearance of Edmund, but forebore to speak to her lady, till she should chuse to impart in confidence to her, what she thought of the conduct of Edmund. "Hast thou not observed the two peasants, who so constantly make their appearance every evening at the edge of the wood, that bounds the plain which my chamber overlooks."—"I have," replied Martha; "and I imagine one of them to be him to whom we are under so many obligations."—"Ah! so I fear," rejoined the beauteous maid; "but what can cause this assiduous appearance? Why does he haunt that wood?"—"Your heart," replied the damsel, "might inform you of that reason. Did he not tell you himself?"—"But surely," said Matilda, "there is no part of my behaviour, surprized as I was by the sudden interview, that could have given him any encouragement, or inspire him with the hope, that I should approve the boldness of his conduct. Oh, Martha, contrive some method of sending him from thence; there are a thousand eyes that are watchful to find a blemish in the unsullied reputation of innocence. Slander will represent him as thus disguised by my appointment, and calumny will stain my unspotted name."—"What shall I do?" said the faithful Martha; "shall I go to him, and demand of him, why he frequents

quents that place?"—"Do any thing, to save the fame of thy mistress from the tongue of the scorners," replied the anxious Matilda. Martha bowed her head in obedience to the commands of her beloved mistress.

At the usual hour, Edmund failed not to visit his accustomed station. Martha eluded the vigilance of the inhabitants of the castle, and escaped their observation, by cloathing herself in a rustic habit, and through an unnoticed path, approached the place where Edmund, with anxious eyes, beheld the castle, the residence of his beloved Matilda; and held conference with Edric. "Maiden," said Edmund, as she drew near him, "where go you alone? the evening advances; the ways are lonely, and this wood is full of danger: innocence may suffer from the hand of violence, and you may too late repent the rashness of exposing yourself to perils you think not of."—"Thanks, courteous stranger," replied Martha, "but I have not far to go; my habitation is in this neighbourhood: then let me in my turn ask, why you are in this solitary place? I am well acquainted with all the people who dwell near lord Reginald's castle, and I never saw your face among them: have you lost your way, or do you seek refreshment from your toils? the hospitable door of Reginald's castle is ever open to the needy stranger."

"WHAT purpose can thy inquisitiveness answer?" interrupted Edric; "pursue thy way in safety."

“TREAT not with ungentle language, the curiosity of the damsel,” replied Edmund; “she meant to inform us where we might be relieved, had we been in want: thou shouldest rather express thy gratitude for her kindness.—We need not the refreshment thou hast mentioned; nor would it avail thee to learn why we are here; let it be sufficient for thee to know, that if thou thinkest thyself in danger, we will guard thee in safety to thy dwelling.”—“Let me thank thee for thy courtesy,” replied Martha, “and entreat thee to permit me to speak to thee in private.” They went apart from Edric. “What wouldest thou with me?” demanded Edmund.—“Thou hast been observed, answered Martha, “to be continually hovering about this place; and what thy design can be is unknown: yet, Sir knight, Matilda from whom I come,”—“What of the beauteous maid!”—“She sees, through this disguise which you have assumed, a man whom she is under many obligations to; and she fears that others will see him too. Her fame is yet pure and unsullied as the virgin snow; the breath of slander and calumny has not tainted her reputation; why will you then expose her to these evils, who never merited such treatment from you? she desires that you may cease to frequent this place, and thereby rid her of those fears, that your present conduct creates; and which a discovery of your person and intentions, would not fail to realize.”—“’Tis enough,” replied Edmund,

Edmund, with a deep sigh; "'tis enough for me to obtain a knowledge of her will and intentions, to oblige me to obey their dictates: I will obey her; but she should know that obedience will be fatal to me; and when I am forced to avoid her sight, or to abandon the view of a place where she is, I have no longer a wish to behold any other object. But yet let me prevail on you to tell me, gentle maiden, whether it is hatred of the unhappy Edmund, that urges her to banish me from this spot, where I enjoy a transitory gleam of consolation, and where I may indulge hope; or is it from any other cause, equally fatal to my life and happiness?" The melancholy accent with which he pronounced these words, penetrated the heart of the compassionate Martha. "Why," said she, "would you tempt me to betray the confidence of my lady? it does not appear by her message, that aversion to you was the cause of it."—"but the consequences are so dreadful," returned he, "that whatever may be the cause they proceed from, the effects will be alike. But may I not once more see her; once more hear from her own mouth, the sentence pronounced against me? that will effectually prevent my ever rendering myself obnoxious to her again?" Martha replied, that she believed an interview of that nature impossible, as well from the fears of Matilda, who would dread a discovery, as the great risque she ran in hazarding such a thing;

thing; and the ill opinion that he himself would conceive of her, in so easily consenting to see a person she was so little acquainted with. Edmund obviated all her objections, and with such fervency assured Martha of his sincerity and affection, that she consented to become his advocate with Matilda, and to endeavour to procure him an interview with her the next night. She informed him, that there was a window of the castle, which was near the ground, where, by passing over the dry moat, he might have an opportunity of conversing with her, and learning from her own mouth, the reasons why she wished to banish him; but she exacted a promise from him, and which he swore on the faith of a true knight, to observe: that, should her lady enjoin him to absent himself, he would never appear there again without her permission. She did not leave him without giving him hopes, that he would soon see and speak with the mistress of his heart; and avowed her desire and inclination to serve him. They parted. Martha returned to the castle to her mistress, who anxiously waited to know the issue of the conversation. Edmund called his squire, and they proceeded to their lodge.

EDMUND'S heart swelled with hope; it exulted in the prospect of happiness. Edric observed that there was an alteration in his manner and voice, and judged that some good news had

had elevated him. Well he knew, that in the hour of joy, as well as of grief, the avenues to the heart are all open, and that its secrets are easily penetrated. The wily traitor learned from the unwary Edmund, the whole cause of his exultation; and in his turn assured him, he well knew the window which Martha had mentioned; and that he would conduct him to a place, where he might easily pass the moat. Edmund, anticipating pleasure, beguiled the way homeward; and Edric failed not to encrease his happiness and security, by pointing out the readiest methods of coming at the object of his wishes.

As the traveller, bewildered, benighted, lost amidst the trackless forest, trembling; and anxious expects the dawn of day, so earnestly, did Edmund expect the return of night, that would convey him to the presence of Matilda. It came at length. But yet some doubts rose in his mind, when he reflected, that perhaps his advocate might not be able to prevail on the scrupulous delicacy of his mistress, to grant him an interview, that would make him the happiest or most miserable of men. But his doubts and fears no longer existed, when he saw a light, the signal of Martha's success, placed in the window. "My stars have been propitious!" exclaimed the enraptured Edmund: "Matilda, the lovely Matilda, condescends to see, to hear me. Inspire my tongue, ye blessed Angels, with
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the softest sounds; let me speak the sentiments of my heart, filled with a pure and virtuous love; and I shall not fail to win her. Come, Edric, conduct me to the spot, where shines the brightest star in the world; where Matilda waits the happy Edmund."—"There is a winding path which leads to that part of the moat which we must pass;—follow me," replied Edric, and he led the way. "We must go through this part of the wood that skirts this lawn," continued he, "and then we shall come directly opposite to the spot." Edmund followed his steps in silence, his heart filled with rapture at the thoughts of seeing his beloved mistress: and so thoroughly was he engaged in the contemplation of her charms and her kindness, that he heeded not whither Edric conducted him, till turning short and stopping, he cried with a loud voice, "Here it is!"—"Where," demanded Edmund, who found himself in a thick wood. "Thou hast mistaken thy way, Edric." He scarce had spoken, when he found his arms secured, by some men who rushed from amongst the trees, where they had been concealed. His sword was torn from his side, and, maugre all the resistance he could make, numbers and force overpowered him, and they bound him. To all his threats, and demands why they treated him in that indignant manner, they who had seized him answered him not a word: at length he bethought himself of his squire. "Where

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is Edric?" said he.—'He is not far off,' replied one of the ruffians; 'and he it is, to whom we are obliged for thus securing you so easily.'—
 "Base slave!" replied the captive; and from that moment he remained dumb, suffering them to convey him where they pleased. He could not resist superior force, and even resistance had been in vain. A sigh burst sometimes from his swollen heart: swollen with rage, the first sentiment his soul was susceptible of, when he found himself attacked so forcibly, and betrayed so traiterously; swollen with grief and anguish, when his resentment permitted him to think of the blissful state from which he had been snatched; when he reflected, that Matilda was at that instant expecting him; that she upbraided his falshood, and called in question his honour and his love; He could not bear to think of it, for it was death and madness. "Grant me patience, good heaven; grant me patience," said the wretched Edmund to himself: "what a reverse of fortune! to know the taste of hope, and have the cup dashed from my lips before I could satiate my thirst: to be indulged with a view of happiness, only to be rendered more miserable, in being snatched from the prospect. Alas! how shall I be ever able to convince the adorable maid, that force and artifice were used, to keep me from her sight? But will she not despise me, for suffering myself either to be overcome by force, or entrapped by treachery? In vain I

fought and conquered in her presence: I am now in bonds; a captive, ignorant of my fate, and only sensible of the injury my honour and my love suffer, by this base treatment." In vain he endeavoured to repress the sigh that burst involuntarily from his overloaded heart. Sensible that the treacherous Edric, in whom he had so unhappily misplaced his confidence, was privy to the sentiments of his heart; he wished to lessen his triumph, and not to give him the satisfaction of knowing, how deeply the success of his villainy had wounded him. He was placed upon an horse, under whose belly, they who seized him, had fastened his legs: witnesses of his former prowess, they feared every motion would be their destruction, numerous as they were, and well knew, owed their security to his rigorous confinement. In this manner, they proceeded through woods and lonely places, with their prize, the ungrateful Edric insulting his misfortunes.

MEAN while Matilda, who with reluctance granted the request of Edmund, sat in anxious expectation of his arrival: silent she sat, revolving in her mind the gallantry of the unknown youth—his figure, his beauty: she thought so lovely a form must be inspired with honour; and on that she founded her hopes of his fidelity, his sincerity, his love. No longer could she disguise the fatal secret to herself, or veil the affection she entertained for him in the garb of gratitude.

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The lovely, the virtuous, the innocent Matilda, sighed for the accomplished Edmund. Pure was the flame as that which inspires the rapt hermit, who sees, in his transported dreams of bliss, the celestial mansions, and antedates future extasy. Her heart, soft and plastic, as the wax warmed by the powerful beams of the sun, received the impression, and retained it. It pervaded her whole system, and every pulse beat in sympathy to love and Edmund. She feared lest he should attribute her condescension to levity, or a passion her soul knew not. Anxious, lest vanity might have prompted him to demand a meeting, and that finding her grant it so readily, he might hold her cheap, and despise her for the easiness with which she complied with his request; she feared not for his personal safety: the arm of Edmund was an host, in the opinion of Matilda. The hours of night hastened away, and the impatience and anxiety of the beauteous maid encreased. The tear stole over her vermeil cheek in silence; and the sigh of distress heaved her lucid bosom. The faithful Martha stood by, equally ignorant of the cause of his absence, and sorrowing at the appearance of grief her mistress wore. The relieving the watch in the castle, awoke her from her reverie. "Martha," said she, with a look and accent that plainly bespoke her inward agitations; "thou hast betrayed and ruined me." She rose and sought her chamber, Martha following

lowing her steps in silence. With difficulty had they eluded the vigilance of the careful Beatrice; and they happily regained their apartment without notice or suspicion: there Martha, at her mistress's desire, repeated the conversation that had passed between her and Edmund the preceding evening; nor had she the least occasion to add to the expressions of respectful affection, that he made use of in speaking of Matilda. That poor lady, whose bosom was filled with inquietude, retired to rest; but she found sleep had fled her, and repose was become a stranger.

EDMUND, in the mean time, was not less at ease; his fearless heart never entertained a thought unworthy its native courage: "These villains mean not to murder me," said he to himself, "else they would have put me to death, as soon as ever they got me into their power; and wherever they conduct me, it is totally indifferent to me, taken away from the only spot of earth, where I wished to be." They led him, thus ruminating, to a castle: the draw-bridge was up, and they were obliged to hail those who watched, to give them admittance. Every object that was thought capable of inspiring fear, was presented to the view of Edmund. He saw the gleam of arms, by the ray of the distant star. The clanking of the chains of the portcullises, opposed to silent horror, that reigned elsewhere, added to the terrior of the scene.

scene. Edmund was taken off the horse, and placed in a spacious court in the castle. Here Edric first addressed him. "Here, Sir knight, your journey ends; and here, perhaps, you may obtain your liberty."—"The first use I shall make of it," replied Edmund, "will be to rid the world of such a traiterous caitiff as thou art."—"You should learn," rejoined Edric, "that force gives way to policy; but follow me and know your fate." With assured step, and scornful visage, the dauntless Edmund followed his steps. He now no longer doubted his being in the power of his adversary, the relentless Ardulph; and found, that by entertaining Edric, he had fallen into the snare, his foe, yet boiling with revenge, had laid for him. He was not mistaken: Edric had found means to inform Ardulph of Edmund's intention to see Matilda that evening; and to acquaint him of the appointment. It was a gratification his vindictive disposition could not deny itself, to destroy Edmund in the moment he thought himself most happy. It confounded and prevented his rival from taking advantage of his victory over him. Secure in Edric's attachment to him, he counted the prize his own; and he accordingly sent a number of men, to hamper the noble Edmund in the toils they spread for him; and to convey him, when taken, to his castle.

To enjoy the triumph, he had assembled the companions of his profligacy, and the instruments

ments of his rapine. There were not wanting the abandoned partners of his looser hours; women betrayed by him to prostitution, who were the abettors of his crimes. The thoughts of getting his rival, both in love and glory, into his possession, had elated his heart, that had not known one joyful sensation, since he had been overthrown by the arm of Edmund. The voice of triumph and exultation echoed through the spacious hall. The hour of midnight had not driven the guests from the festive board. High foamed the generous wine in the capacious bowl, and inflamed the tumid veins of the licentious revellers. At that moment, Edmund followed the treacherous Edric to the presence of his recreant lord. "So may the foes of Ardulph perish! thus may he ever triumph over his enemies," said the pernicious caitiff, as he threw himself at the feet of Ardulph.—'My friend, my saviour,' exclaimed Ardulph, starting from his seat, and raising Edric from his humble posture, 'thus let me fold in my arms the man to whom I owe every thing; my love, my honour, my redeemed glory. Ask what thou wilt, that Ardulph can grant, and he will think it a mean reward for thy services.' While he spoke, the company cast their regards on Edmund, who stood unmoved in the midst of danger, and, with an intrepid look, beheld his foes indignation and disdain were visible in his countenance; and his eyes, that hurled de-

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fiance, contemptuous defiance to Ardulph, shot flames, that blasted the hopes of his abandoned confederates. Even the haughty soul of Ardulph was humbled before him. He stood in his presence, silent and confused; and the virtuous Edmund did not then less triumph over him, than when he overthrew him on the plain, and tore from him the badge of his ostentatious love for Matilda.

“It is no longer a secret then, who has been the author of this force; ungenerous Ardulph! what has tempted thee to use me thus; and why hast thou been guilty of this injustice to me?”—“Can’st thou ask me why?” retorted Ardulph; ‘hast thou not presumed to rival me in love and in glory? and dost thou demand of me, why I use thee thus? relinquish thy pretensions to Matilda; quit this realm; and give me sureties for the performance of these injunctions, or thou shalt linger in want and confinement here, till thou shalt curse the hour thou ever daredst to enter into competition with Ardulph.’—“And hast thou then, discourteous knight, forfeited all thy pretensions to honour and to knighthood; and basely trepanned the man in the darkness of the night, and by the wiles of treachery, that thy soul fears to meet? Unbind me; restore my sword; and be Matilda the reward of the victor: for never will I relinquish the sweet hope of possessing the lovely maid; nor will I ever yield to those terms you
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wish to impose."—"I consent," replied the haughty lord, inflamed with rage, and heated with the banquet. "Be it as thou sayest: loose the bands that confine him, and let this instant decide our fates!" "And that instant thy fate had kicked the beam, ungenerous Ardulph! Inferior was thy right arm in strength, and weak was thy spirit in the strife with Edmund. 'Thou wouldest have fallen the victim of his rage, had not the policy of Edric again saved thee.'" He well knew that the cool, determined soul of Edmund must conquer the blind impetuosity of Ardulph. "And why would my lord," said he, "put that to hazard, which he has already secured? Will Ardulph mate himself with despair? Let thy foes know the bitterness of grief in the horrors of confinement; while Ardulph enjoys a life of liberty and love: be Matilda thine. In vain shall she expect the advent of her minion: Reginald shall yield his daughter to thy arms; while the rival of thy power shall gnash his teeth in vain; in vain shall curse his destiny, and envy thy bliss."—"Thou counsellest well," replied Ardulph; "the words of wisdom dwell on thy lips, and prudence guides thee. Be it as thou sayest, Edric. He is not worthy to fall by my hand; but I will wring his soul with aggravated tortures, when he sees the maid he pretends to love; she who now waits for him, and sighs with expectation, sickening at his delay; when he sees her yield her charms

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to Ardulph, and becomes a witness to my happiness.'

"I WONDER not," replied Edmund, "that the cautious Ardulph has taken the counsel of that traitor, Edric: such a counsel best suits his own heart; and under such advice he may shelter his own fears. Yes, recreant, base lord, thy vassals have ensnared me; and thou, like a coward as thou art, upbraidest me with the wrongs you have made me suffer. But compleat thy villainy: murder me at once. The arm of Edmund is no longer at liberty; what hast thou to fear? murder me: here are the assassins. The dagger of Edric thirsts for the blood of him who fed, who protected, who foolishly pitied him. Murder me at once; for while this heart throbs, it will never forget the injuries that Ardulph hast done me; nor can it ever forgive them. Assure thyself I will pursue thee with unceasing vengeance; and dreadful will be the expiations of the wrongs of Edmund."—"Thou hast been answered," replied Ardulph; "to thy care, Edric, I commit him. I contemn thy threats and fear thee not: thou art mine now, and shalt never taste the sweets of freedom again. Conduct him to his dungeon." The remorseless Edric obeyed, and Edmund was plunged into a cavern, dark, damp, and comfortless. There was he left to mourn his fate, while Edric hastened to join the associates of his crimes, and drown the remem-

brance of his treachery in the bowl of ebriety. The mansion of tyranny is the dwelling of adulation. The base and servile hearts of the sycophants who surrounded Ardulph, commended his deeds, and united in the praise of Edric.

WHEN he returned from securing his prisoner, he took his place at the board, where every mouth was open to applaud him. The subject of their discourse was Edmund. There was not wanting some, who counselled Ardulph to do as he had been advised by Edmund himself; and hide at once, the wrongs he had done him, and prevent future revenge: others strove to appear merciful, by saving his life, only to reserve him for a greater variety of torments. They contested on either side for the propriety of their opinion; their brains were heated with wine, and their souls were polluted with guilt. It was an assembly of fiends eager to destroy.

APART sat Ardulph, on whose breast leaned Alicia, his favourite paramour, in secret counsel with Edric. The advice he offered his lord was politic and crafty. "You demand of me," said he, "if I know who he is: it was most carefully concealed from my knowledge and enquiries; but I believe him to be of quality, not inferior to thine: but why he keeps himself thus disguised, except on account of the daughter of Reginald du Bray, I know not; and she, haughty and reserved as she is, could stoop to the addresses of a peasant, and reject the offers of Ardulph."

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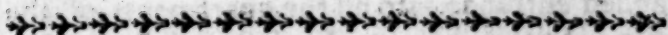
‘ May they both perish !’ replied the enraged baron. ‘ Her minion shall die. Is there not cause ? Has he not twice disappointed and frustrated my hopes ? Has he not slain my vassals, and heaped shame and dishonour on me ? Has he not presumed to rival me in my pursuits of beauty ? and has he not succeeded ? He shall perish.’—“ Let my lord attend to the words of caution ; so shall his vengeance be gratified with safety. The eloignement of Edmund will not fail to promote enquiries of what is become of him ; and should it be known by the treachery of your men, or any other accident, that he is confined here, it will stain the name of Ardulph for ever. Pursue the design you first formed. What now hinders you, but to possess Matilda ? Thy power will terrify the weak, and confound the fearful. Edmund groans in bondage. Gratify thy revenge and thy love.”—“ How ? Edric, inform me how ; my soul longs to make her feel the weight of my resentment. I will enjoy her beauties : I will revel in the delightful repast.”—“ What are her beauties to thee, Ardulph ?” replied Alicia. “ Coldness chills her breast, and the averted eye of disdain shall check the flames of desire. Think not of the coy, the haughty maid.”—“ That coyness, that haughtiness, but encreases her charms, and she shall be mine. But think not that, though obliged to wed her, she shall rule here as the wife of Ardulph : grief and neglect shall tarnish her beauties,

ties, and the lustre of her eye shall be dimmed with weeping. Thou, Alicia, thou shalt still reign in the heart of Ardulph. But how shall I overcome this maiden's obstinacy and perverseness?"—"Make a feast, invite her father hither," replied Edric: "he will come; and, to shew his reliance on thy faith, bring but few attendants: inform the old baron of thy love for his daughter. Should he refuse to grant her to thy wishes, you may appear to force him: leave the rest to me."

THE favourite of Ardulph cursed Edric in her heart, for the counsel he had given. She feared the power of Matilda's charms; she dreaded the virtues she possessed not; and she anticipated the loss of that pleasure she then enjoyed. Wearied with excess, they retired to rest; and, overpowered with wine, sunk into the arms of sleep—all but the hapless Edmund, and the treacherous Edric. The latter employed himself in contriving means to destroy the noble lion he had entangled in his toils: and the former groaned with anguish at the recollection of the happiness he might have enjoyed; and at the miserable reverse of fortune he then suffered. Alicia also slept not: the jealousy of a rival inflamed her breast, and she was determined, by some means or other, to disappoint Edric's schemes.

END OF THE THIRD BOOK.

BOOK



B O O K IV.

SOON as the morning rose, Ardulph put his design into execution. He dispatched a messenger to the castle of Reginald. "Lord Ardulph has prepared the feast of friendship; and he bids lord Reginald as his guest. Matter of high import has he to communicate to thine ear, and which it will profit thee to know. He waits thine answer."—"Hasten then," replied the baron, "and tell thy lord, that Reginald will accept his invitation: I will follow thee." Accompanied only with a few domestics, Reginald bent his way towards the castle of Ardulph, who received him with much fair show and friendly guise. He had taken care to display all his bravery, to do honour to his guest, and impress him with a favourable idea of his wealth and power.

EARLY in the morning also, Alicia, who had beheld Edmund with a favourable eye, through all the misfortunes that surrounded him, sought the dungeon where he lay, unnoticed by Ardulph or his wily companion; whose thoughts were employed in the manner of treating and gaining their point from Reginald. Ardulph's fondness had trusted Alicia with a key that com-
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manded entrance into all the apartments of the castle. She struck at the door of the prison. "Sleepest thou, stranger?"—"No," replied Edmund, "the happy and contented may sleep; though not the injured and the miserable. But who art thou, that demandest of me such a question?"—"One," rejoined she, opening the door, "that pities thy misfortunes, and laments the occasion of them: here are such refreshments as my haste and fear of discovery would let me procure for thee: eat and be strengthened."—"Thanks, courteous lady; heaven will reward this charity and humanity, to a man so much wronged, and so basely treated."—"You have yet more to fear from the caitiff Edric," replied Alicia: "his coward soul is incapable of any good, and is practised in every mischief. Guard against him."—"Would to heaven, I could get him once within my reach, his brains should stain these walls, and his fate be a warning and an example to all such traitors."—"Perhaps he may meet thy vengeance: but hasten, and let me return. Should it be known that I have thus relieved thee, all future opportunities would be prevented. However, prepare thyself to see me soon again; the next visit may be more agreeable to you."—"The visits of the kind and the compassionate, are ever agreeable to the unfortunate. Take my thanks and good wishes with you, lady." She answered not, but fastening the door of his prison, left him

him to ruminate on what she had told him. This only served to confuse him: he threw himself on the straw that was spread for him, and lay in anxious expectation of an event that he was prepared for, let the consequence be what it might.

ARDULPH, in the mean time, lost no opportunity of ingratiating himself with Reginald: he humbled himself before him, and sought every means to gain his good opinion. The feast was spread in the hall, and every delicacy that could be procured tempted the appetite, and gratified the taste: high foamed the joy-inspiring bowl, and loud resounded the voice of mirth in the castle of Ardulph. The guests were few, and they departed when the repast was finished. Reginald was left alone with his host, Edric only waiting the command of his lord.—“ Lord Ardulph,” said the old baron, “ the messenger, who bade me here, informed me that thou hadst some matter of importance to us both to communicate; thy servant only prevents my learning the cause of this summons.”—“ He need not prevent it,” replied Ardulph; “ of known and tried fidelity is he, and the close and honest preserver of his master’s secrets: yes, lord Reginald, much had I to say to thee, but fear of refusal prohibits me to urge my suit.”—“ Ardulph can ask nothing in honour that Reginald will not grant.”—“ For that persuasion” replied the haughty Ardulph, “ I will inform you of the cause: thy daughter, Reginald, is fair; her
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charms have captivated my heart: my possessions are large, my vassals are numerous, and my power is great: thus do I propose myself to thee; let me wed Matilda, and her dower shall equal thy desires, let them be extravagant as they will.”—“I court not riches, nor seek I fortune,” replied Reginald; “yet the alliance with Ardulph would be pleasing: however, there is yet the consent of the maiden to be obtained; I will not, cannot, force her inclinations, and her will must crown your demands with success.”—“Then my application to you was in vain: unless you exert a father’s authority in my behalf, I know she will not consent to receive me as an husband.”—“How can’st thou be assured of that?” replied Reginald, “unless thou hast attempted, by some methods unknown to me, to gain her affection? which was not done like a true knight, nor was it a suitable return for the hospitality that I shewed you ever.”—“I will not answer your reproach,” rejoined Ardulph, “in the manner it deserves; but will avow that I never attempted to gain her affections in any other manner than I could always justify; yet well I know that she has received the addresses of others, and can be kind to some inferior in quality to me, and unworthy her.”—“Ill it befits thee, lord Ardulph, to stain the good fame of my daughter with thy ungenerous imputations; I tell thee, that the mother that bore thee was not more virtuous than
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my child."—"It suiteth not the deportment of a virtuous maiden to have midnight-meetings with a man whom she knoweth not, but as he weareth the appearance of a man; such a conduct bespeaketh not a chaste or virtuous mind."

"—"Tis false," replied Reginald, whose honour was stung to the quick by the aspersions thrown on his daughter; "'tis false as hell, and the revenge unmanly thou takest for the slight my daughter has shewn thee."—"I will prove it," said Ardulph, "nay, prove that she sent for her paramour to meet her."—"Some slave, base lord, whom thou hast suborned to injure the good character of my child; but I will not credit him, nor thee, presumptuous boy."—

Ardulph could ill brook the treatment of the baron before; but the last assertion deprived him of all constraint, and he gave way to the impulse of his passions.—"Thou hoary traitor," replied he, boiling with rage, "dost thou come thus to asperse my credit under the roof that protects thee? My patience is at an end, and thou shalt pay severely for thy insolence. Thy daughter I despise, and but to be revenged of her scorn did I demand her in marriage: I would have treated her as I will treat thee. Dost thou think me so base a slave as to have forgotten, and consigned to oblivion, the injuries my father sustained by thee? No, they live in my remembrance, and they shall be revenged."—

"I came hither on the faith of a knight," replied

plied Reginald: "forget not your duty; dismiss me in safety, and then I will meet your vengeance."—"No," replied Ardulph, "the power is now in mine own hands, and thou shalt not find me weak enough to quit it; I will confine thee here, nor shalt thou see the light of heaven till thy daughter is thy ransom—Ho! Edric."—"I will die first, base ruffian," said Reginald; and unsheathed his sword.—"That weapon will but little avail you," replied Ardulph, with a contemptuous smile; "if force will not, numbers must succeed; consider then how useless resistance must be."—"I care not," replied the reverend chief; "shame and disgrace are strangers to Reginald; and but that I pay respect to the laws of hospitality, which here thou hast violated, I would make thee know that I am not to be thus treated any where with impunity."

EDRIC, in the mean time, pursued another scheme, which his treacherous brain had set on foot for the service of his lord. When the repast was nearly finished, he dispatched a messenger to the castle of Reginald. He demanded instant admittance to Matilda; and the declaring he came from her father obtained it. He was instructed to say,—“Thus did Edric, the servant of Ardulph; but the friend of Reginald bid me tell thee, lady, Ardulph has demanded thee in marriage of thy father, which he will not consent to. The haughty heart of Ardulph

is enraged at his refusal, and he prepares to use violence to thy father to force him to comply. Find some expedient to save him. He is surrounded by numbers, and few are his followers in the castle of Ardulph."—The tender heart of Matilda was truly susceptible of the danger her father was in; for she knew and dreaded the violence of Ardulph. She was alarmed at the cause of it. Yet what could be done? Her aunt Beatrice was along with her when this message was delivered. She was incapable of directing the distracted mind of Matilda to pursue a proper course. In this situation it occurred to her to send for father Anselm. Matilda sat bathed in tears, debating with herself what to do in this emergency. Her love for her father at length overcame all other considerations, and she took her resolution how to act before the prior arrived. The good old man obeyed the summons, and hastened to the presence of Matilda. "Father," said the distressed maid, "you have been informed perhaps of the cause of being thus called to the succour of the wretched." "I have," replied Anselm. "Then," continued she, "accompany me to the castle of Ardulph: my palfrey is ready and my attendants are prepared: I will go and offer myself the ransom for my father. Perhaps Ardulph will respect the holiness of your function, and the purity of maiden honour, and we shall obtain our desire."—"Alas," replied the old man, "these
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are but weak barriers to oppose to violence and injustice. However, I will go with thee, pious maiden, and fail not to exert myself in thy behalf. Small will be the number of my days, and I will sacrifice my life with pleasure for the service of my patron. Let us go. There is a power mightier than Ardulph, who will protect thy virtue and innocence.' They took but few martial attendants. They were children of peace, and went with the language of prayer and supplication. They had proceeded but a short way, when they perceived a man hastening towards them with all imaginable speed. He was pale, breathless, and almost spent with fatigue. "Is the beauteous daughter of Reginald du Bray in this company?" demanded he. 'She is,' replied the prior: 'declare thy business.'—"I come from Edric," said he, "who bade me tell her, that her father is"—'Oh heaven preserve his sacred life!' exclaimed she: 'say not he is slain; for I shall die too.'—"He is not slain," returned the messenger, "but, overpowered by numbers, he is made prisoner; nor had this been done without the assistance of Edmund: he who formerly overthrew Ardulph, is now his friend."—"Martha, dost thou hear the words of this man?"—"I do," replied the damsel: "but I will not believe them to be the words of truth."—"Oh, Martha, he scorns my lightness, and has abandoned me to Ardulph. Be it so: for I am now prepared for any fate. Let me release my father, and die.'

EDRIC, in the mean time, obeyed the command of Ardulph; and, attended by a troop of ruffians, entered the hall where Reginald stood armed in his own defence, holding converse with Ardulph. "Here," said he, "Edric, take and bind this hoary recreant, who has presumed to violate the peace of this roof, by his uncourteous deportment."—"Not while I live," said William, the faithful and honest companion of lord Reginald's toils, and the frequent partaker of his glory, who had, suspecting his lord's safety, got into the hall among the crowd, unnoticed and unperceived. He spoke, and joined his master's side. Reginald, with a smile of satisfaction, beheld him.—"William," said he, "we have fought and conquered together; and what remains for us now?"—"To die together," replied the squire. "Be it as you say then," exclaimed Ardulph, transported with rage. "Seize the caitiffs, Edric." The band approached; but the timid soul of Edric shrunk from the sight of danger. One more hardy than the rest approached Reginald; but the arm that went to seize him lost its power; for the sword of the warrior severed it from his body. His companions beheld the sight with dismay, and retreated: at a distance they eyed their prey, and feared to meet the fate of their comrade. "Slaves," said Ardulph, "are you awed by a withered arm? But that I scorn so poor a conquest, I would shew you how little you had to dread." Again they approached; and another fell by the hand of Wil-

liam. They again withdrew, and in silence confessed their fears.

ALICIA beheld this unequal combat, and dreaded the event. She had heard the first messenger that Edric had dispatched deliver an account that Matilda was on her journey to the castle of Ardulph: she suspected his affection for her, and feared the charms of her rival, made yet fairer by virtue. The only remedy she had was to prevent Reginald from being overpowered, and by that means hinder the arrival of Matilda.

IN this conjuncture she cast her eyes upon Edmund, both as the rival of Ardulph, and whose valour might turn the contest in favour of Reginald. She hastened towards the prison where he was confined, and, while every eye was engaged by other objects, she conveyed his sword under her garment, which had been taken from him the night before. Edmund lay upon the earth, lost in thought, when he heard the bolts of the door grate as they moved. He started up, and beheld Alicia entering.—“Your looks bespeak something extraordinary,” said he; “declare it!”—“There is no time to be lost,” she replied; “if you are the friend of the father of Matilda, hasten and save him; he is oppressed by numbers, and will perish. Here is your sword.”—“It is,” exclaimed he with transport, “it is a good one. Thanks, gentle lady; but where are they? Lead me to them; give one hour to vengeance, and then let me expire.”—“Follow me.” He obeyed, and she led him to the court of the castle where

the hall was, in which stood Reginald, like a stag at bay, his fearful pursuers not daring to approach him. When Alicia had brought him into this court she left him. The clashing of arms struck his ear: his soul exulted. "Where are the friends of Reginald?" cried he, with a loud voice. 'Here,' answered three attendants; who had not been able to join their master.—"Follow me then, if you regard your lord." He ran towards the door of the hall, which he burst open with his foot. Edric heard the noise, and hurried towards the door, to learn the cause. The first object that struck his eye was Edmund, armed for vengeance. He would have fled, but surprize and fear tied his feet. He aimed a blow at him with a trembling random hand. Edmund caught his arm ere it fell; "Die, slave; traiterous, miserable caitiff, die." He spoke, and snatching Edric's sword from his nerveless hand, he plunged his own into his breast. He screamed, and fell. The troop of miscreants that surrounded him retired. "Ye are not the objects of my wrath," said Edmund, rushing through them; "fly hence, and owe your safety to your absence." They obeyed, and Edmund stood before the astonished Ardulph. Grief and rage had blanched the roses in his cheeks! his hair stood wild, and matted! part fell, and shading his eyes, seemed to hide the vengeance which they threatened, too dreadful to behold! In his left hand gleamed Edric's sword: his right brandished his faulchion, yet dropping with the traitor's blood. Not more

‘dreadful does the spectre of the night rise to him whose soul is stained with murder, than did Edmund appear to the eyes of Ardulph. He started back. “ ’Tis well, Ardulph,” said Edmund, “ thy guilty heart acknowledges the injuries thou hast done me: draw, and defend thyself; vengeance is on foot, and must be satisfied.” The fury of Ardulph was awakened by this defiance. ‘Yes,’ replied he, ‘ the satisfaction thou meritest thou shalt have.’—He drew, and rage supplied him with fresh vigour. His passion without restraint, hurried him away, and he attacked Edmund with an impetuosity that required skill and courage to defend. “ This is acting nobly !” said Edmund, “ and supporting your deeds at the risque of your person: but I have the advantage over you while I am thus doubly armed: we will meet on equal terms, and let fortune decide.” As he spoke he threw away Edric’s sword, which he had in his left-hand. ‘Wert thou any other but what thou art,’ replied Ardulph, ‘ this generosity would make me esteem thee; but I hate thee to death, and despise thee for thus putting it in my power to be revenged of thee: depend on it, that should I acquire any advantage over thee by any means, thou hast no mercy to expect at my hands.’—“ I will ask none,” returned Edmund. Again their swords clashed: again the furious Ardulph fought to redeem his lost honour, by overcoming Edmund. Nearly of an age, both skilled in every feat of knightly prowess, there was every exertion of dexterous skill in avoiding each other’s blows, and valiant assurance in

courting danger. "Shall we remain here idle beholders of this combat?" said William to his lord, "while that gallant youth engages our mortal foe?"—"Honour forbids us to take this advantage even of an enemy," replied Reginald; "I like the bold and skilful conduct of the youth: he is a match for Ardulph, and yet I think I have seen his face before, but where I cannot recollect; however, let us join our friends, and prevent his being oppressed by odds, or overpowered by numbers, during this contest." He moved towards the door of the hall. The fearful instruments of Ardulph's violence fled his approach. In the mean time the battle continued. Edmund's foot meeting some of the fragments of the repast, which had been dropped on the floor, he slipped. Ardulph was not wanting to improve the advantage: the blow he aimed at his adversary would have eased his apprehensions of him for ever: but Edmund, recovering himself with the greatest agility, and warding off the fury of the stroke, only received a wound on his shoulder, which instead of abating, augmented his courage. Ardulph, hoping to end the conflict by one fortunate blow, had thrown himself upon Edmund, who he imagined would not rise again; but the contrary happening, it put him into the power of his enemy, who failed not to improve the opportunity, and shortening his sword, plunged it into the hapless Ardulph's side. Unable to sustain the blow, he staggered, he fell. "Thou hast triumphed over me twice," said he, "who-

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ever thou art; and powerful must be the arm which conquers Ardulph. "But life flies apace, I have a long account to settle; send some priest to shrieve me, and, if any help can save me, let me not want it."—"I will not," replied Edmund, "and sorry I am that I was forced to this deed." He found Reginald and his 'squire at the door of the hall, guarding the entrance, and preventing Alicia from going in. "He is fallen!" said Edmund, "let some assistance both for his soul and body be sent him." "Thou hast slain the noble Ardulph then," replied the dame; "curse on these hands that released thee from thy captivity, and may the arm wither that was raised against the life of Ardulph. Ho, help! the wretch has slain the lord Ardulph. My screams shall rouse their coward souls to be revenged of thee. Mayest thou find Matilda as averse to thee as she was to Ardulph, and hate thee as much as I do. Cursed be my jealousy, and cursed my woman's fears, that were the means of affording thee an opportunity of doing ill." Edmund avoided the war of tongues; and when he heard Alicia pouring forth her curses, bent his way to the gate of the castle, which he luckily found open, and took the first road that presented itself to him. Reginald, who had not been inattentive to what Alicia, in the bitterness of her heart, had uttered, was struck with her mentioning the name of Matilda. "Lady," said he, "thou didst pray that Matilda might be averse to him; what Matilda is that?"—"Thy daughter, Reginald: that

is the man whom she was to have met last night ; he is her minion, her paramour, and whom Ardulph trepaned last night, and threw into a dungeon, till he was released by my accursed hands ; for I dreaded lest Ardulph should have obtained your consent to wed your daughter. Nay more, that traitor Edric, who so justly fell by that young man's hand, has contrived to seduce your daughter from your castle, and she is on the road hither : he is now gone to meet her, and unless you hasten after him, she also will be in the power of him who has slain my lord. Let me fly to succour Ardulph.' She no longer met opposition from Reginald, and she ran to her wounded lord. Reginald was motionless with surprize at the account he received from Alicia : the corresponding testimony of two people first staggered his opinion of his daughter, and then first his heart felt a pang occasioned by her conduct. " What this woman says has the appearance of probability, whether it is true or no," said he to William ; " but while we are talking here, perhaps my child may be endangered by his attempts." He mounted with all possible expedition, and pursued the road to his castle.

CHANCE had conducted Edmund into the same road : he walked, or rather ran as fast as he could, without knowing he went. In a short time he met the second messenger, whom Edric had sent to alarm Matilda, returning from the delivery of his embassy. He was one of the men who had seized Edmund the night before,

and therefore was acquainted with his person ; and perceiving him now at liberty, he doubted not, but the message which Edric had delivered to him, was literally true. He stopped at seeing him. “ She is coming !” said he.— ‘ Who !’ demanded Edmund.— “ Matilda !” replied the messenger, “ whom Edric sent me to, with the account that you had assisted lord Ardulph in confining her father.”— ‘ Good heaven !’ exclaimed Edmund ; and seizing the horse by the reins, ‘ what a scene of villainy is unfolded to my view : alight instantly.’ The trembling coward obeyed. ‘ And where is she now ?’— “ Not far hence,” replied the faltering slave, ‘ hastening to the castle of Ardulph.’ He made no reply, but vaulting on the horse, drove him at full speed to meet Matilda. She journeyed slowly on, oppressed with melancholy thoughts. The tears coursed each other over her fair cheeks ; and in silence she ruminated on her hard fate. She doubted, at one time, the information of the messenger concerning Edmund : and then again, recollecting his conduct the preceding night, she feared it might be true. In the midst of these reflections, the sight of a man on horseback at a distance, making towards them with all imaginable speed, alarmed this little troop. “ Alas !” said Matilda, “ he brings us more bad tidings.” He soon came near them, and she fancied she saw Edmund. As he approached, her doubts were realized ; and she beheld him bloody : a sword in his hand, yet stained with slaughter : his

looks wild and ghastly. It was too much! it was insupportable! Every distressing, every horrid idea crowded into her mind at once. She could only pronounce, "Oh, Edmund, oh, my father:" and fell into a deadly swoon. Edmund, who had thrown himself off his horse, caught her in his arms, and prevented her fall. Martha ran to her assistance; and they conveyed her to a bank that was on the side of the road. Edmund on his knees supported her; watching with looks of the utmost anxiety, and with the heart of anguish, the return of his beloved Matilda to life. "She is gone!" exclaimed he, "and I have no more business on earth!"—"It ill becomes thee, young man," said the prior, "to express a concern for the daughter, when thou hast been the means of destroying her father."—"I will forgive thy prejudices, because thou hast been deceived, reverend father, but Reginald is well, and I have been the means of preserving him; a few minutes will convince you of the truth of what I say." Matilda began to shew signs of life; and the care of her damsels soon recovered her. The first object that presented itself to her eyes, as she opened them, was Edmund on his knees before her. "What dost thou here?" said she: "where is my father? Dost thou come covered with his blood to woo his daughter?"—"Lovely lady," replied Edmund, interrupting her, "it is with the blood of the foes of Reginald, that Edmund is covered. I left him in safety and at liberty; many have been the snares

laid for us both ; but we are now extricated from them. Ardulph has fallen by this hand ; that Ardulph, who was the rival of my love, and dared to aspire to Matilda. But sooner would I die a thousand deaths, than injure thee or thy father : think not so ill of me.' As he spoke, Reginald and his attendants appeared in sight. Her heart was easy, for she believed then every thing that Edmund had said. He still remained on his knees ; his arm supported her, when her father arrived on the spot. " Degenerate girl," said he, seeing them still in the same posture, while Edmund's back was turned to him. " Is it in the hour of thy father's danger, that thou comest to meet and indulge thyself with thy paramour ? Is it thus, that the daughter of Reginald demeans herself ? And is it thus, that the fame of Matilda is to become the talk of common mouths ? I had flattered myself with the hopes that thou wouldest not have brought disgrace on thy father's grey hairs, and have bestowed thy affections on thou knowest not whom : and he, whosoever he be, must be base and unworthy, to have thus attempted to stain the honour of an ancient house ; and seek to rob me of the treasure of my declining years : but, old as I am, I will take care of my honour, and that of my family." Matilda, abashed and penetrated to the soul at the baron's words, hung down her head. The reproaches of her father sunk deep into her soul ; for she was conscious that she had in part deserved them ; and her tears only spoke

for her. Not so Edmund: he started on his feet, and approached Reginald, who regarded him with a look of wonder and pleasure. "Lord Reginald," said he, "you wrong me; the soul of Edmund is incapable of doing such base acts: 'tis true I love your daughter; I—!" —"Gracious heaven!" cried Reginald, throwing himself off his horse, and embracing the youth: "This, this is he, Matilda; this is he of whom thou hast heard me speak: this is the gallant knight who rescued thy father from the hands of the infidels. Matilda, embrace the deliverer of thy father."—"He is also the man who delivered me from the hands of those ruffians, who assailed me in the wood," replied Matilda, in her own justification, with a trembling voice: "and he also it was, that overthrew Ardulph at the tournament."—"Yes, yes, Matilda," added her father, "this is he! but why have you so long prevented me from shewing my gratitude to you? or why have you kept yourself so long from my knowledge?" and he strained him to his breast as he spoke."—"Thou hast found me, lord Reginald," replied Edmund, "before it was my design to discover myself to thee; and now I will inform thee of the reason why I have so long debarred myself the pleasure of improving by thy experience, and thy virtues. The service I happened to render you, was not worth your acknowledgments. The generosity of

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your disposition augmented its value; and I therefore rather shunned you, to avoid your grateful heart, which would have covered me with those favours I had not merited. When I returned to England, I heard of the beauty and the virtues of thy daughter. Determined to see whether fame had done her justice, or encreased her charms, I came in disguise to thy castle. I saw; I loved. Thou seemest to know the rest: but I scorned to presume upon the favour thou wouldest have shewn me, to possess your daughter's hand, without touching her heart: I am yet at a loss for that; but must now be indebted to that kindness, which I formerly shunned; nor will Reginald think his honour stained, or his family disparaged, in matching Matilda with the only son of Thomas de Clifford."—"de Clifford!" exclaimed Reginald: "he is my old, my approved, my honoured friend. Yes, Edmund, I will now discharge the debt of gratitude, that I have so long owed thee: and will not Matilda help me to pay it?" The lovely maid blushed as her father spoke; and on his repeating the question, replied——

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END OF THE FOURTH AND LAST BOOK;

